SHOPPERS DRUG MART
SEE WHAT'S NEW... CHECK OUT OUR LATEST OFFER ON PAGE 26



Beef with the Biebs

Two men are accused in a bizarre plot to kill Justin Bieber, according to New Mexico police PAGE 10

DEFENCE MATTERS TO MOOSEHEADS

AS GOOD AS OFFENCE HAS BEEN, THE D HASN'T BEEN SHABBY EITHER PAGE 41



HALIFAX metro®

Thursday, December 13, 2012

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A FESTIVE FIT

Dwight Hennigar, right, of the Halifax Regional Police helps Jason Drysdale try on a Montreal Canadiens hat while looking in a mirror during a shopping spree at the Halifax Shopping Centre as part of the 8th Annual CopShop event. There were over 50 kids participating this year. Story, see page 6. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Mayor Mike Savage: A man with a plan

Wowing the crowd. Head of HRM gets thumbs-up all around for speech spelling out plans, policies, direction for next four years

Mayor Mike Savage's first speech to the Chamber of Commerce spelled out a pretty big vision for Halifax, and ended with an unprecedented standing ovation.

"I believe that's a first for the chamber," said chamber board chair Paula Gallagher as the audience members took their seats.

The speech, titled The Way Forward, included a focus on revitalizing the downtown core — a process Savage said should start with a "legacy project" on the Cogswell Interchange.

"The convention centre's really important to us, the new library's really important — this could be bigger than either," he said. "I would like to see … something that people would look at the way they look at other iconic developments around the world. This is not a building we're talking about, this is a community. This is huge."

Savage emphasized HRM's many communities can only flourish if the downtown core is thriving.

"I believe downtown revitalization will help the entire region, not only in terms of tax revenue, but in terms of synergies, whether it be tourism, food production or economic development," he said.

Towards that end, the mayor said he launched his term in office with an "aggressive" plan to restructure the municipal planning and development department and minimize red tape.

"I am determined that we can't have good ideas getting a maybe in Halifax and a yes in other places," he said.

Savage reiterated the need for the province to act on the long list of legislative-amendment requests from HRM, dating back to 2006, and urged chamber members themselves to focus on the city's positives rather than dwelling on the negative. "I think we've got all the assets we need to make a huge mark in the world," he said. "And we're going to make that point or die trying over the next couple of years."

RUTH DAVENPORT/METRO

Quoted

"Municipal government is the opportunity to bring ideas to the table without all the distractions of ideology and past history, so I want every idea that I can get."

HRM Mayor Mike Savage

More coverage, page 3



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South Shore.
Sex offender agrees to give up teaching licence

A former elementary-school teacher convicted of committing indecent acts has agreed to surrender his teaching licence after a public outcry over his bid to return to the classroom.

The South Shore School Board voted in favour of a settlement with Peter Speight late Wednesday at its meeting in Lunenburg. Board superintendent Nancy Pynch-Worthylake confirmed the settlement was for more than the $150,000 in back pay that Speight was owed, but she would not provide more details. She said he will have to resign his position.

Word of the deal came just hours after Education Minister Ramona Jennex had stepped in to direct that Speight be placed on administrative leave until a dispute over his teaching certificate was resolved.

Parents of students at the rural school in New Germany where Speight used to teach reacted with outrage this week when told he would probably return to work in January.

Speight was given a conditional discharge in 2009 after he pleaded guilty to committing an indecent act for three incidents in Halifax in which he stopped his car, hailed a woman on the sidewalk and masturbated.

Last month, the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia upheld an arbitrator's ruling that said the school board was wrong to fire him as a Grade 3 teacher. The court said the firing was unreasonable. It also said Speight had completed rehabilitation, is considered a low risk to reoffend and should be awarded $150,000 in back pay.

The education department had also revoked Speight's teaching certificate after his guilty plea, but another arbitrator overturned that decision. That prompted the department to ask for a judicial review.

The courts had ordered that the board engage in a restorative approach to ensure Speight's reintegration at the school went smoothly. That approach included a series of meetings this week with teachers and parents. During two of those meetings, parents lashed out at the school board, saying their children were being put at risk.

Local resident Alice Eagles said she and her husband were among many parents considering pulling their children out of the school.

"My six-year-old daughter is asking me questions that no six-year-old should ask any parent. The kids are scared to go to school," she said.

Speight couldn't be reached for comment.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/CKBW



Mike Savage gives his first speech as mayor on Wednesday to the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Savage appeared as part of the chamber's series of luncheon speakers appearing at the Schooner Showroom at Casino Nova Scotia. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Universities, colleges get top billing in Savage's speech

Back to school. Mayor praises post-secondary institutions, urges local businesses to 'make room' for new grads



RUTH DAVENPORT
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The presidents of two Halifax universities say they were delighted to hear HRM's mayor talking up local post-secondary institutions in his first speech to the Chamber of Commerce.

"It was so exciting to me, I tweeted it!" said Dr. Ramona Lumpkin, president of Mount Saint Vincent University.

Mayor Mike Savage made the universities and community colleges the first focus area of Wednesday's speech, emphasizing their role as strategic assets.

"Our universities and colleges are economic drivers in a creative, knowledge-based economy," Savage said, adding Nova Scotia universities generate nearly $1 billion in annual export revenue.

Dalhousie president Dr. Tom Traves said it was refreshing to hear a Halifax mayor recognize the value of local academia in realizing the city's potential.

"We are among the largest employers in the city, and we're filled with people whose job it is to think creatively about a lot of different issues," he said. "We look forward to sharing that capacity with other groups in the community and city officials."

Savage also told the chamber crowd that in the interests of stemming the Western brain drain, HRM will hire and mentor new, local post-secondary graduates, starting this year. He urged Chamber members to do the same.

"If graduates need to leave Halifax to get the experience to qualify for a job here, it's hard to get them back," he said. "I encourage chamber members to consider where in their organizations there might be room for an intern or a new hire."

Gabrielle Morrison, vice-president of administration at Saint Mary's University, said that was another welcome message. "We're attracting students here for their graduation, giving them education, so then we've got to hire them," she said. "So (Savage's) emphasis on that is really important, and one we should all give thought to."

Quoted

"It's costly and demanding for businesses to take on young prospects, but it really has potential. So it's great for the mayor to be a cheerleader on that particular front."

Dalhousie president Tom Traves

Twitter

Mayor Mike Savage's speech to the Chamber of Commerce resulted in plenty of feedback on Twitter, and "Savage" was trending locally for most of Wednesday afternoon. Here's a sampling of what members of the audience had to say:

- **@MSVUpresident:** Mayor Savage, in his inaugural address, delivers a bold vision for our city and emphasizes the important role our universities can play.
- **@HfxComedyFest:** Listening to mayor Mike Savage address the #halifax chamber of commerce. Great speech!
- **@berryjen:** @MikeSavageHRM closes by asking everyone to "work" together to create a Greater Halifax and receives a standing ovation from @halifaxchamber
- **@DonMillsCR:** A Great speech by Mike Savage at the Chamber luncheon. Finally some leadership & vision in Halifax.
- **@SteveCraig4HRM:** Well received inaugural address by Mayor Mike Savage at Halifax Chamber of Commerce distinguished speaker series today.

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Province spending beyond means with $500M capital plan: Opposition

Money matters.
Finance minister says infrastructure spending will create 3,700 full-time jobs



ANDREW RANKIN
andrew.rankin@metronews.ca

Facing a shortage of federal funding, the province unveiled a $525-million capital plan for the next fiscal year that the opposition parties say isn't sustainable.

Nearly half of that cash ($247 million) is devoted to paving and upgrading highways in the province while $152.1 million would be injected into government buildings and land.

Finance Minister Maureen MacDonald announced details of the 2013-14 plan on Wednesday. She said the plan, which is more than $100 million higher than pre-recession capital plans, is meant to offset a sluggish economy and dwindling federal stimulus funding. The current 2011-12 capital plan amounts to $711 million.

"We are still in a very slow economic growth situation," said MacDonald

Government expects the plan would produce 3,700 full-time jobs across the province.

Federal government money amounts to $25 million of the plan.

The plan would see $3 million go toward the SAP program, which the government turned over to IBM along with 100 employees last month.

Liberal finance critic Diana Whalen said taxpayers shouldn't have to continue paying for the SAP program.

"We have to continually invest and own that infrastructure, that doesn't sound like a very good deal to me," she said.

Whalen accused the government of spending beyond its means in an effort to buy votes with an election expected soon. Whalen also said more money should be injected into the province's deteriorating hospital infrastructure, which was deemed a serious problem in the auditor general's report last month.

The capital plan will be included in the government's budget that will introduced in the legislature in the spring.

Quoted

"The time has come for the province to match the capital spending of the province to its ability to pay. I don't see that here today."
Tory Leader Jamie Baillie



Finance Minister Maureen MacDonald says the capital plan is meant to offset a sluggish economy and dwindling federal stimulus funding. METRO FILE

Investments

Major investments in the 2013-14 capital plan:

- $247 million in highways and structures
- $152.1 million in buildings and land
- $35.2 million in information technology projects
- $14.1 million in vehicles and equipment
- $64.1 million in capital grants
- $12.5 million for potential extra work





Christmas comes early for 50 lucky CopShop kids

Getting in the holiday spirit. Underprivileged children pair up with police officers for shopping spree as part of 8th annual program



HALEY RYAN
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A young boy with blond hair and glasses gasped when he saw a green dinosaur on a hook among all the toys.

"Yoshi!" yelled nine-year-old Jason Drysdale, running to pick up the stuffed character backpack (of the Super Mario Bros. video games).

"Awesome! I love this guy," he said, hugging Yoshi and grinning widely.

Drysdale and 50 other children were paired up with members of the Halifax Regional Police on Wednesday to go shopping as part of the 8th annual CopShop program.

Officer Dwight Hennigar, sporting a blue and white Santa hat with the Toronto Maple Leafs logo, held Drysdale's hand as they took a Halifax Shopping Centre escalator down to Sport Chek to find a coat.

On top of the $200 gift certificate donated by the Shopping Centre, every child in the program got a free winter coat from Sport Chek. Drysdale's was blue, orange and puffy.

Stephanie Guilfoyle, spokesperson for the Halifax Shopping Centre, said the program allows kids to get to know officers in a casual setting.

"Sometimes it can seem like an intimidating position, a police officer, and it's an opportunity for them to have an impact on a child's life," she said.

Drysdale said he was glad to miss a day of school to "do fun stuff," but only found out he was picked for the program on Tuesday night. "My dad said, 'So you want to go to CopShop tomorrow?' And I said, 'What?!'"

Hennigar said he has been volunteering for CopShop "pretty much since the beginning."

"We're all still kids at heart," Hennigar said, watching Drysdale search through a rack for the perfect Montreal Canadiens jersey.

"I don't do much Christmas shopping for myself anymore," Hennigar said. "This part right here is the best."

Quoted

"But you're a police officer, you have thousands of dollars!"

Jason Drysdale to Halifax police officer Dwight Hennigar, as he hoped for a few more toys



Jason Drysdale, left, tries on a jacket at Sport Chek at the Halifax Shopping Centre on his shopping spree with Dwight Hennigar of the Halifax Regional Police. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Shopping cart

Items from Jason Drysdale's shopping cart:

- A new winter coat
- Montreal Canadiens tuques for himself and his brother
- A Gatorade water bottle
- A WWE John Cena Brawlin' Buddies figure
- A Yoshi toy backpack
- A WWE FlexForce wrestling ring
- Four wrestling figures
- An extra-small Brian Gionta jersey

The program

CopShop 'the right thing to do,' says cop

Const. Donny Jenkins of the Halifax Regional Police said the kids in the CopShop program were chosen based on financial need.

"We try to seek out the most underprivileged, the most needy," Jenkins said.

He said officers in communities and schools get to know about the children's home lives and recommend them for the yearly event.

For the first time, Jenkins said 51 kids were chosen because the police union donated enough money for an extra child to take part.

CopShop started in 2005 and has spread to eight Canadian cities. More than 300 kids took part across the country this year.

METRO



Officers prepare to enter a trailer on Matheson Drive in Salmon River on Wednesday at the scene of a possible meth lab. TRURO DAILY NEWS

RCMP probe possible meth lab

Firefighters stood at the ready at both ends of a trailer on Matheson Drive in Salmon River as three RCMP officers geared up in hazmat suits and prepared to enter the trailer on Wednesday afternoon.

The residence was a possible meth lab and the officers, with the RCMP Synthetic Drug Section and Clandestine Laboratory and Enforcement Team, sent a robot into the home first.

"The investigation is still in its preliminary stages, and we don't know how big it is or who is involved," said Sgt. Al Affleck with the Bible Hill RCMP detachment, which is conducting the investigation along with Truro Police Service.

The detachment arrested a man Tuesday night at approximately 7:30 p.m. and took over the trailer a half-hour later, thanks to a search warrant. The property was secured overnight until officers arrived and could make their way into the trailer.

"This is rare for us," said Affleck about the possible meth lab. "It would be the first for Colchester County, and I believe the first for Nova Scotia."

After the officers checked out the trailer, they had to be hosed down by the Special Hazards Response Unit.

Police were expected to be at the scene throughout the night and into Thursday.

TRURO DAILY NEWS

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Getting into the Christmas spirit

Members from the Halifax Regional Fire Department volunteer their time (and ladders) to help decorate the Africville Church with Christmas lights on Wednesday. This Saturday is the Africville Inaugural Church and Tree Lighting Ceremony, which starts at 4:30 p.m.

JEFF HARPER/METRO



Former paper mill to turn into new research facility

Lost jobs. Bowater Mersey paper mill shut down this year, laying off 320 workers

The former Bowater Mersey paper mill in southwestern Nova Scotia will be converted into a research, development and demonstration facility.

Premier Darrell Dexter made the announcement Wednesday in Brooklyn, where he said his government was teaming up with private utility company Emera and CelluFuel, a renewable-energy company, to launch the site.

The establishment of the centre comes after the government made a deal this week to acquire 220,000 hectares of land from Resolute Forest Products Ltd., the mill's former owner, while taking on $117.7 million in debt.

It also follows a recommendation made by a panel that examined how to revitalize the region's economy after the paper mill shut down earlier this year, laying off 320 workers.

Emera has signed on as the centre's first tenant, promising to spend at least $1 million over the next five years.

Innovacorp, a provincial Crown agency that focuses on venture capital investment, will spend up to $500,000 to cover start-up costs.



Darrell Dexter METRO FILE

The provincial government is also giving $500,000 to CelluFuel which is intended to help the company turn wood biomass into renewable-diesel fuel.

The government says the money matches an investment from the private sector. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Land deal

The Nova Scotia government has given a nature park acquired in a land deal with the former owners of the Bowater Mersey paper mill to Queens County. Pine Grove Park is a 29 hectare package of land located in Milton.

Standing up. Londonderry residents plan to fight to retain post office

Canada Post will have a public spat on its hands if it plans to shut down the community's post office as suspected, the municipal councillor for Londonderry says.

"Certainly, there is going to be a letter-writing campaign to our MP and to Canada Post," Tom Taggart said.

"The bottom line is, if the community is prepared to stand up and say we're not ready to give up here, that's what we're going to do."

The postmistress at the Londonderry post office is set to retire at the end of December after about 26 years of service.

Although Canada Post has previously stated that it has yet to make a decision on the future of the post office, Taggart believes the writing is on the wall, given that there has been no public notification of what its plans are.

"I want to know what the process is for closing the post office and I think that this has been deliberately held back from the community on purpose, so that they didn't have a chance to challenge the closure," he said. TRURO DAILY NEWS

No final decision

Canada Post spokesman John Caines on Wednesday reiterated that no final decision has been made on the post office's future and will not be until officials have met with community leaders.

Quoted

"Certainly, there is going to be a letter-writing campaign to our MP and to Canada Post."

Londonderry Coun. Tom Taggart

Slew of weapons found

Man charged after gun violence in Spryfield

A Halifax man is expected to appear in provincial court today to face a slew of weapons charges after an incident in Spryfield.

Police received a 911 call from a home on Catamaran Road in Halifax at 11:26 p.m. Tuesday. A man in the home allegedly attacked a female visitor and pulled a gun on her. Officers arrested the man as he tried to get away out the back door. A search of the home turned up a handgun, six long guns and a compound bow.

A 39-year-old man was held in custody overnight and is facing 21 charges, including assault, assault with a weapon, possession of a dangerous weapon and possession of a firearm without a licence. METRO

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Dad who killed his children freed

A father who stabbed his children to death will be a free man, less than four years later.

Guy Turcotte has been granted his release, with conditions, from a psychiatric institution. The cardiologist had been found not criminally responsible for killing his two children and, since last year's court verdict, he had been in Montreal's Pinel institute.

His case provoked a torrent of outrage in Quebec, where Turcotte is a household name.

He had admitted to stabbing his young children 46 times but said he didn't remember doing it, hadn't wanted to do it and had been experiencing blackouts on the night of the killings.

He said he was distraught over the breakup of his marriage. His wife had left him for a family friend who was her personal trainer.

Turcotte's release was unanimously approved today by a three-member panel. He will have to get annual mental-health checkups, continue his therapy, stay out of trouble and avoid all contact with his ex-wife. But his legal woes are not over yet: The Crown has filed to appeal the 2011 court verdict.

The Tories plan to introduce a bill in the House of Commons early next year that would make the safety of the public the paramount factor for review boards that determine an offender's release.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Criminal code plans

Several cases like Turcotte's, including the 2008 bus-beheading in Manitoba and the Schoenborn child-killings in B.C., have prompted a federal policy change. The Harper government plans to make it more difficult for mentally ill offenders found not criminally responsible to be released from custody.

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Singer Justin Bieber at a Dec. 5 event in Philadelphia. A plot to murder the singer in November was foiled by police. LISA LAKE/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Alleged plot to murder Justin Bieber thwarted

Disclaimer.
Warning: This story contains graphic details

A police affidavit alleges that two prison inmates and a nephew were hatching a plot to murder Bieber and his director of security while the singer was in New York for shows on Nov. 28 and 29.

Details of the grisly plan — which involved strangling two other victims with a paisley tie and then castrating them — were revealed Wednesday in an affidavit for arrest obtained by New Mexico State Police.

But the plot may have been thwarted by a missed highway exit and a pair of recorded phone calls between an inmate and one of the accused.

According to the affidavit, the plan was hatched behind bars after inmate Dana Martin was transferred from a Florida prison to the Southern New Mexico Corrections Facility in April.

Martin, 45, serving a life sentence for the rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl in Vermont, was reportedly obsessed with Bieber. He had written him letters and even had a tattoo of the singer on his leg.

He allegedly recruited Mark Aaron Staake, 41, a fellow inmate at the time, after Staake noticed the tattoo on his leg. The plan was to kill four people in two states, with Bieber as the main target.

Oddly, the details were spilled on Nov. 20, when Martin asked to speak to police, telling them Staake (who had been released on probation on Oct. 22) and his nephew, Tanner Ruane, 23, had been planning to commit the first two murders — neither of them Bieber. New Mexico police declined to identify those intended victims.

Martin is serving consecutive life sentences for murders committed in 2000. The strangulation murder of the 15-year-old girl was a "case of jealousy," police told The Associated Press.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Suspected mastermind

- **Manipulator.** The police affidavit describes Martin as "a very good manipulator," who convinced Staake that he had access to large sums of money and a multimillion-dollar home and property, where Staake and Ruane could hide out.
- **Connections.** He also told Staake that he had connections to Chinese gangs in New York, who had "sanctioned" the murders, according to the affidavit.

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Tories 'hit the reset button': F-35 mess to be reviewed

Bombshell findings shock MPs. Costs could soar to $45.8 billion over 42 years, long-awaited KPMG report warns

The Harper government has "hit the reset button" in the F-35 mess.

A bombshell report has exposed the cascading multibillion-dollar cost of the stealth aircraft.

The long-awaited KPMG report warns the Lockheed Martin-built F-35s could cost Canada as much as $45.8 billion over 42 years.

The report says National Defence neglected to build a large enough financial cushion into the plan to replace Canada's aging fighter fleet.

And the paltry-by-comparison $9 billion the department set aside likely won't be enough to cover the planned purchase of 65 jets.



That F-35 headache just won't go away. Defence Minister Peter MacKay takes part in a Parliament Hill news conference on the controversial fighter jets on Wednesday. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Now the entire process will be reviewed, Public Works Minister Rona Ambrose said Wednesday.

"The next step is a full review of options," Ambrose told a news conference following the release of the report.

"We have hit the reset button and are taking the time to do a complete assessment of all available options."

Defence Minister Peter MacKay said the government will ensure "that balance is maintained between the military needs and taxpayer interests.

"Ultimately, our government will get the best plane for the armed forces, for our pilots and for Canadian taxpayers."

The NDP's Opposition critics were unmoved, however, insisting the government was steadfastly refusing to admit the whole process has been fumbled.

"You can't move on, you can't move forward, until you've admitted that you've got a problem and that you've made mistakes," said Matthew Kellway, the party's procurement critic.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Numbers game

65

The number of jets in the government's planned F-35 purchase. But the soaring costs may force a reduction to 55 planes.

Wire cash, please

Skype scam almost pays off

Police are warning people to be on guard against fraudsters using Skype.

Kingston police say a resident got a Skype video call from a man identifying himself as a doctor held prisoner in Syria.

The supposed doctor said if $2,500 was not transferred to a Western Union office in Lebanon, he would be beheaded. The victim wired funds — but later contacted police and stopped the transfer.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Software icon

McAfee booted from Guatemala

Anti-virus software founder John McAfee arrived in Miami Wednesday after being deported from Guatemala, and was expected to be escorted by U.S. federal authorities after he cleared customs.

He had sneaked into Guatemala from Belize, where authorities want to question him in a homicide.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



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North Korea flies high, UN brings it down to Earth

Pyongyang jubilant over rocket. Security Council warns of reprisals — but it all depends on China

Rocket-happy North Korea got an angry rocket on Wednesday … from the United Nations Security Council.

It condemned the North Koreans' successful rocket launch and said it will urgently consider "an appropriate response.''

But whether that response includes new sanctions against the North — which the United States and its European allies are seeking — depends first and foremost on China, the North's closest ally.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said in Beijing the council's response should be "prudent and moderate and conducive to maintaining stability and avoiding escalation of the situation."

The Security Council said the launch violates Security Council resolutions adopted after North Korea's nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009.

Secretive North Korea also broke a ban on "any launch using ballistic missile technology," it complained.

The successful rocket launch is widely seen as a test that takes North Korea one step closer to being capable of sending a nuclear-tipped warhead as far as California.

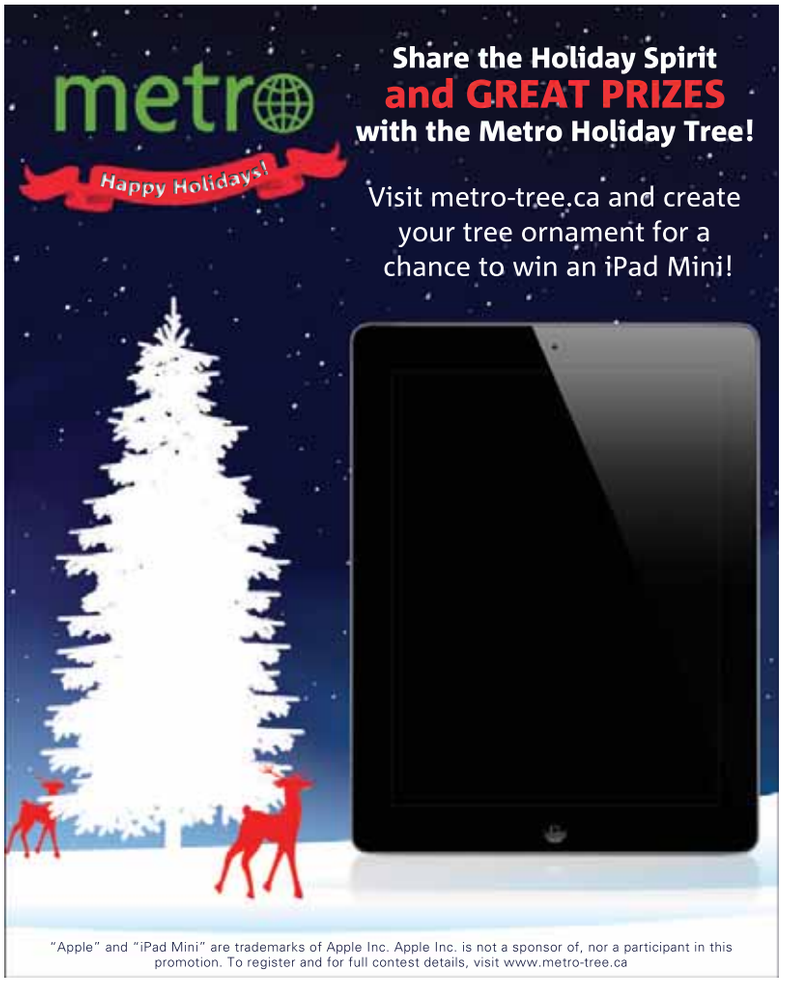
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

The launch "constitutes a very dangerous challenge to … the security situation in the Korean peninsula and northeast Asia."
Kim Sook,
South Korea's UN ambassador



The flames of anger burn in South Korea over the North's rocket launch. In Seoul, protesters burn a mock rocket only to see police move in with fire extinguishers. South Koreans fear for the security of their country. AHN YOUNG-JOON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Canada pledges $15M as refugees flee Syria

Canada will contribute another $15 million in humanitarian aid to help Syria's neighbours cope with the overflow of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the country's civil war.

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird announced the extra funds at a large international meeting in Morocco with the Syrian opposition.

Canada will give Jordan an additional $5 million on top of the $6.5 million Baird announced on a trip to the country earlier this year.

Canada also contributed another $10 million to the international agencies working on the Syrian refugee crisis, bringing its total contribution to $22 million.

Baird also said the government would give Jordan $1.5 million worth of protective personal equipment to guard against a chemical weapons attack in Syria.

Baird echoed the growing global concern that Syrian President Bashar Assad might resort to using chemical weapons against his own people as the 21-month popular uprising against his regime continues.

"We remain deeply concerned about the potential loss of control over chemical weapons stockpiles, missiles, and other conventional weapons, which could pose a wider global and regional threat,'' Baird said.

Earlier, he said: "There is considerable concern that some recent actions by the Syrian regime have indicated that they were beginning to mobilize, to be in a position where they could use them," Baird said from Morocco.

And that, Baird declared, has produced "increased deep and grave concern."

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Syrian rebels clean their weapons Wednesday at their headquarters near Idlib, Syria. MUHAMMED MUHEISEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canada stands firm

As expected, Canada did not join the U.S., Europe and other allies in recognizing the new Syrian opposition as the sole body to succeed the Assad regime.

- **Our demands.** Canada wants Kurds, Christians and Sunni and Shiite Muslims to have a place in Syria's future — and it wants radical Jihadists weeded out.

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‘Gangnam Style’ tops list of Google trends in 2012

Zeitgeist. Whitney Houston, Superstorm Sandy and Kate Middleton round out year-end list of high-traffic searches

The world’s attention wavered between the tragic and the silly in 2012, and along the way, millions of people searched the web to find out about a royal princess, the latest iPad, and a record-breaking skydiver.

Whitney Houston was the “top trending” search of the year, according to Google Inc.’s year-end “zeitgeist” report. Google’s 12th annual roundup is “an in-depth look at the spirit of the times as seen through the billions of searches on Google over the past year,” the company said in a blog post Wednesday.

People around the globe searched en masse for news about Houston’s accidental drowning in a bathtub just before she was to perform at a pre-Grammy Awards party in February.

Google defines topics as “trending” when they garner a high amount of traffic over a sustained period of time.

Korean rapper PSY’s “Gangnam Style” music video trotted into second spot.

Superstorm Sandy, the damaging storm that knocked out power and flooded parts of the East Coast in the midst of a U.S. presidential campaign, was third.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

What do you meme?

Facebook and Yahoo’s top trending phrases (popularly known as “memes”) include:

- **YOLO.** It means “You Only Live Once”—both sincerely and ironically.
- **Binders full of women.** Mitt Romney describes his search for female cabinet members.



PSY of “Gangnam Style” fame in Miami Saturday. MICHAEL KOVAC/GETTY IMAGES



Jury sees gory scenes in trial of Que. filmmaker

Graphic. The violent, sexually explicit works were based on a serial-killer character Remy Couture created and portrayed

The jury hearing the trial of a Quebec special-effects artist charged with corrupting morals has had a chance to see his handiwork on Wednesday.

Remy Couture, a horror filmmaker and makeup artist, is charged with corrupting morals through the distribution, possession and production of obscene materials in a case that explores the boundaries of artistic expression.

The seven-woman, five-man jury silently watched hundreds of photos and a pair of videos that depict gruesome murders, torture, assaults and necrophilia —all with young female victims.



Special-effects filmmaker Remy Couture
GRAHAM HUGHES/THE CANADIAN PRESS

The jury is tasked with deciding whether the material in question is obscene and dangerous enough to actually incite people to act out what they see, as the Crown contends.

Couture argues his work has artistic value and the state's interference amounts to an infringement of his right to free expression.

The jury asked for the court to speed up the process of viewing the photos Wednesday. The judge approved the request. The photos were originally being shown for about 10 seconds each, but were eventually switched roughly every five.

The images appeared on a website Couture hosted, dubbed "Inner Depravity." The violent, sexually explicit, horror-inspired works were based on a serial-killer character Couture created and portrayed.

Couture's trial got underway Monday with jury selection and two weeks have been set aside to hear evidence.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

On the web

For more news go to metronews.ca

Basketball team beats opponent 107-2

An Indiana high school girls basketball team routed an opponent 107-2 this week, prompting an official with the state prep sports association to say he never wants to see anything so one-sided again.

Bloomington South coach Larry Winters told the Indianapolis Star there was no effort to embarrass Arlington or run up the score during Tuesday's game.

He says he played all nine of his players and didn't stop shooting because "that would have been more embarrassing" to Arlington, whose only points came on a free throw in the second quarter and another in the third.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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UN war crimes tribunal convicts Bosnian Serb officer of genocide

Srebrenica massacre.
'Right hand' of Ratko Mladic found guilty of having lead role in 1995 murder of some 8,000 Muslim men and boys

A UN war crimes court convicted a former senior Bosnian Serb army commander Wednesday of genocide for playing a key role in Europe's worst massacre since the Second World War, and sentenced him to life imprisonment, delivering another measure of justice to survivors still hunting for the remains of their husbands and sons.

In a majority ruling, a three-judge panel at the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal said Gen. Zdravko Tolimir was the "right hand" of Bosnian Serb military chief Gen. Ratko Mladic, who is considered the chief architect of the murder of some 8,000 Muslim men and boys at the Srebrenica enclave in eastern Bosnia in July 1995.

"The accused not only had knowledge of genocidal intent of others but also possessed it himself," Presiding Judge Christoph Fluegge said. "He is therefore responsible for the crime of genocide."

Women who lost their menfolk in the massacre travelled to The Hague to watch the judgment and were pleased with the latest conviction.

Quote

"This is what we expected, and we feel better now. We hope the court will continue to conduct fair trials."

Srebrenica widow Rejha Avdic, 50, who lost her husband in the massacre.



In this photo taken Tuesday during a gathering in the northern Bosnian town of Tuzla, 149 kilometres north of Sarajevo, survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre hold photographs of male relatives who were killed. AMEL EMRIC/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"Finally, we witnessed a small bit of justice," said Munira Subasic, leader of a group called the Mothers of Srebrenica. "We are still alive to witness it and we are still searching for the bones of our sons."

Tolimir stood, crossed himself three times and removed his glasses but showed no emotion as Fluegge told him he had been convicted of genocide and would spend the rest of his life in prison.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

1995

Bosnian Serb forces overran Srebrenica in 1995.

- **UN.** The presence of Dutch United Nations peacekeepers who were outgunned, outnumbered and who put up virtually no resistance did not deter the Bosnian Serbs. They later took over another UN-protected enclave in the nearby town of Zepa.
- **Massacre.** Women were bused away from the area before the Muslim men and boys were rounded up, taken to remote locations around the town and executed. Their bodies were then plowed into mass graves.

Egyptian Coptic blogger gets 3 years for blasphemy

A Cairo court on Wednesday convicted a Coptic Christian blogger who shared an anti-Islam film on social networking sites, and sentenced him to three years in prison for blasphemy and contempt of religion.

The case of Alber Saber is one of several seen by rights advocates as a campaign led by Egypt's ultra-conservative Islamists to curb free expression. Many of those targeted in the campaign are Christians, who make up about 10 per cent of Egypt's population of 85 million.

Saber was arrested Sept. 13 after neighbours complained he had shared on Facebook the amateur film made in the U.S. that sparked protests across the Muslim world. His arrest came during a wave of public outrage over the film, produced by an Egyptian-American Copt.

At the time, an angry mob surrounded Saber's house, calling for his death and accusing him of heresy, atheism and of promoting the Innocence of Muslims — the short film that portrays the Prophet Mohammed as a fraud, womanizer and buffoon.

Saber's verdict comes as Egypt has been plunged into a political crisis over a draft constitution. Islamist supporters say the charter is a step toward stability while critics warn it will open the door to increased suppression of freedom in the name of religion.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quote

"This is an outrageous verdict and sentence for a person whose only 'crime' was to post his opinions online."

Amnesty International's Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, condemning the verdict and demanding Saber be freed immediately and that all charges against him be dropped.

Other convictions

- Last month, another Egyptian court convicted in absentia seven other Coptic Christians and a Florida-based pastor, sentencing them to death on charges linked to the Innocence of Muslims video.



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U.S. fiscal cliff imperils energy, mining sectors

Canadian fallout. Failure to reach deal would hit some types of companies especially hard, observers say

A plunge by Washington over the so-called fiscal cliff would hit Canadian miners and energy companies particularly hard since a slowdown in the U.S. economy would also drag down prices for base metals and oil.

Paul Taylor, chief investment officer for fundamental equities at BMO Asset Management, said Wednesday it will be the cyclical sectors that will be most affected if U.S. lawmakers fail to reach a deal to avoid the automatic tax hikes and spending cuts set to kick in next year.

"We are very much dependent on energy and materials which represent, of course, nearly 50 per cent of the Canadian equity market by market cap," Taylor said.

Consumer concern

- A new poll by Sun Life Financial suggests 63 per cent of Canadians are concerned our economy will be hurt if a deal to avert the fiscal cliff is not reached.
- "Along with high debt levels and a slowing real estate market in Canada, the fiscal cliff situation in the U.S. is giving Canadians another reason to worry about the Canadian economy," said Sadiq Adatia, chief investment officer of Sun Life Global Investments.

"And with slower U.S. — and read from that slower global economic activity — you would have to expect that the price of base metals and energy on which we depend so heavily would be affected negatively and they would certainly lose a bit." THE CANADIAN PRESS



Turning the page on e-readers

A young girl looks at a Sony e-book at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October in Frankfurt, Germany. Sales of dedicated e-reading devices are in an "alarmingly precipitous decline" this year after five years of rapid growth, research firm IHS iSuppli says. Full-blown tablets with colour screens are behind the decline, the firm says. IHS expects shipments of e-readers to fall from 23.2 million last year to 14.1 million this year. The rapid rise and now rapid decline of e-readers is unusual even for the volatile consumer electronics industry, says IHS analyst Jordan Selburn, but it's indicative of the broader trend of single-purpose devices like e-readers and cameras losing out to general-purpose ones like tablets and smartphones. GETTY IMAGES FILE

Ignition issues

Honda recalls 870,000 vehicles

Honda is recalling about 870,000 minivans and SUVs worldwide because they can roll away even though drivers have removed the keys from the ignition.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR 101.55¢ (+0.15¢)

Natural gas: $3.40 US (-1¢)
Dow Jones: 13,245.45 (-2.99)

TSX 12,353.09 (+70.74)

OIL $86.77 US (+98¢)

GOLD $1,717.90 US (+$8.30)

Social media.

Facebook attempts to make privacy controls more user-friendly

Facebook is trying to make its privacy controls easier to find and understand in an effort to turn the world's largest social network into a more discreet place.

The fine-tuning announced Wednesday will include several revisions that will start rolling out to Facebook Inc.'s more than one billion users in the next few weeks.

The biggest change will be a new "privacy shortcuts" section that will appear as a tiny lock on the right-hand side at the top of people's news feeds. This feature offers a drop-down box where users will be able to get answers to common questions such as "Who can see my stuff?"

Other updates will include a tool that will enable individuals to review all the publicly available pictures identifying them on Facebook.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS





Airlines put the fun back in flying with cocktails

In-flight perks. Lost baggage? Delayed connections? At least you can have a mojito

Airlines have found a way to take the edge off the stress of flying and make a few extra bucks along the way: Fancy new cocktails, craft beers and elegant wines.

The drinks advertised in the back of in-flight magazines — or on sleek seatback touchscreens — are starting to resemble those served at nightclubs.

• Virgin America offers Grandma's Coffee, an iced cappuccino with Jack Daniels whiskey for $9 US. Its beer selection includes San Francisco-based 21st Amendment and Black Star from Whitefish, Mont. Both cost $7.

• US Airways has partnered with mixer company Stirrings to sell mojitos and cosmos for $8 each.

• Delta offers the Sky Breeze, which is vodka, Fresca and a splash of cranberry-apple juice over ice for $7. It also sells small-batch bourbon from Woodford Reserve for $7.

Flying isn't what it used to be. Long lines, ever-changing security rules and limited overhead bin space have all made travelling much more stressful.

Quoted

"It's simply a matter of finding a way to get people to spend money. They see people spending $12, $14, $15 or more for fancy martinis, cosmopolitans or other beverages on the ground."

Henry Harteveldt, a travel-industry analyst with Hudson Crossing

It's no wonder many passengers are looking for a little escape. Airlines, which created much of this anxiety in the first place, are happy to oblige.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Air travel may be getting more stressful, but the drinks are getting tastier.

ERIC RISBERG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Serbia. Police detain retail tycoon

Serbia's billionaire retail tycoon and one of the Balkan country's most influential figures was detained Wednesday in what the nationalist government said is a major anti-corruption sweep.

Miroslav Miskovic, one of the richest people in impoverished Serbia, is the owner of Delta Holding company, which deals with retail, real estate, insurance and agriculture business in Serbia and the rest of the Balkans.

He was detained by police along with his son, Marko, and eight other people in connection with the privatization of several road construction and repair companies in 2005 during which the suspects allegedly "gained illegal profit" of about $39 million, prosecutors said.

Serbia's nationalist government has launched several anti-corruption probes since coming to power in June. Critics say they have been mostly aimed at political opponents and allies of the country's previous pro-Western leadership. But Serbia must fight graft, if it wants to fulfil its goal of becoming a member of the European Union. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



EU. Leaders edge closer to agreement on banking oversight

European Union finance ministers moved closer Wednesday to creating a single supervisor for their banks after France and Germany said they had largely patched up their differences over the new body's powers.

The agreement on a banking supervisor is a vital part of European countries' efforts to protect themselves from future financial crises.

Recently, it seemed unlikely a year-end deadline to set up the supervisor would be met because of disagreements between France and Germany. Wednesday's meeting was called because Europe's two biggest economies failed to find a compromise last week.

But a deal now appears within reach. As he entered the meeting, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble wouldn't commit to inking a deal at Wednesday's meeting, but he sounded an upbeat note. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Trains

Bill Gates ups ownership in CN

Bill Gates has increased his overall stake in Canadian National Railway Co. to about 12 per cent.

Cascade Investment LLC, a company owned by the billionaire founder of tech giant Microsoft, says it has acquired an additional 13,670 shares of Canada's largest railway for $1.25 million.

The investment company now owns a total of 43 million CN shares representing 10 per cent of the company. Gates controls an additional 1.98 per cent of CN stock through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a charitable trust.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

StatsCan report

Job vacancies rose in September

Statistics Canada says the number of job vacancies has grown on a year-over-year basis. The federal agency says there were 267,000 vacancies in September, up 19,000 from September 2011.

As a result, it says there were 5.3 unemployed people for every vacancy that month, down from 5.7 a year earlier. Statistics Canada says the decline in the ratio of unemployment to job vacancies was all the result of the increase in vacancies.

Provincially, the highest ratio of unemployed people to job vacancies was in Newfoundland and Labrador, where there were 11.2 people out of work for every open position.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

White House, Congress remain far apart on deal, Boehner says

U.S. House Speaker John Boehner said Wednesday that "serious differences" remain between him and President Barack Obama in negotiations on averting automatic spending cuts and tax increases that economists fear could send the U.S. economy over the so-called fiscal cliff.

Boehner's comments came as top Democrats pushed back on GOP demands for tough steps like raising the Medicare eligibility age and curbing the cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security.

Quoted

"I think it's getting worse, not better."

House GOP whip Kevin McCarthy on the likelihood of averting the fiscal cliff

Boehner and Obama spoke on the phone twice Tuesday, a day after the president offered to reduce his initial demand for $1.6 trillion US in higher tax revenue over a decade to $1.4 trillion US. But Obama continued to insist that much of the revenue come from raising top tax rates on the wealthy.

Boehner countered later Tuesday with another offer, but on Wednesday, he offered a sour assessment of the situation less than three weeks before the cliff would strike the economy with $500 billion US worth of spending cuts and higher tax rates if left in place through September.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SHIELDS UP! RED ALERT!



HE SAYS...
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Friends, Romulans, countrymen! Lend me your pointy ears. I come not to bury Star Trek (frankly, Voyager did that), but to praise it.

Star Trek: The Next Generation is on Netflix now, and I'm completely engaged. To my surprise and delight, many of my Facebook friends have independently made it their priority No. 1, and it's resulted in the sort of long, passionate comment threads usually only seen under shared photos of ultrasounds and/or Stephen Harper.

I've complained in this space before that too much modern pop culture is just the repackaging of ideas we've seen before. But I can't deny the movies I've been anticipating most lately: Bobcaygeon The Movie (documentary based on a rock ballad), Les Miserables (movie adaptation of a musical adaptation of a French musical adaptation of a novel), and Star Trek Into Darkness (sequel of a reboot of a movie version of a TV series).

TNG regeneration

Going back to the future is a pleasant reminder of my not-so-dazed-and-confused youth — I get older, the Enterprise crew stay the same age.

I can get all snobby at Men in Black 3, but if it's John's Crap: The Sequel, then my objections mysteriously disappear. In truth, if they made a movie of The Wire, I'd probably show up in costume (rumpled suit with vomit stains).

So I apologize for my earlier complaints. Star Trek: Regurgitation is just fine by me.

I was the perfect age for the original run of TNG — 11 years old when it debuted as a juvenile imitation of the original series, and 17 when it was over, by then a Hugo Award-winning masterpiece beloved by virgins worldwide. So going back to the future is a pleasant reminder of my not-so-dazed-and-confused youth — I get older, the Enterprise crew stay the same age.

In a world where people no longer meet in town halls and churches, some of us get our sense of community by discussing the legends of Vulcans or Orcs or hard-drinking ad execs. Whether that's a step forward or back I'll leave to you.

But what fun to get lost in the minutiae of a 24th century, where anything can happen except good roles for women. How wonderful to laugh at the stuff they got wrong (Picard's personal computer is amusingly thick) and got right (Picard and Riker discuss a European union). How satisfying to gauge a fellow Trekker's knowledge level by their recognition of "Make it so" (beginner), "THERE. ARE. FOUR. LIGHTS!" (intermediate), and "All Husnock — everywhere" (expert).

My excitement led me to decide that I'm going to watch every worthwhile Star Trek episode, which after several hours perusing reviews and ratings online I've determined is 30 episodes of the original, six episodes of the animated series, 54 episodes of TNG, 69 of DS9, 29 of Voyager and 25 of Enterprise. (I just hope the experience doesn't turn me into a nerd.)

It's good to boldly go where I've already been before.



Taking us out of here, again: The cast of Star Trek: The Next Generation.
2012 CBS STUDIOS INC HANDOUT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Love is sweeter by the dozen



KIN CHEUNG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

12/12/12 SWAK

Last triple-date to wed your mate

Many couples kissed during a mass wedding ceremony at the Peak in Hong Kong, on Wednesday. At least 700 couples were expected to get married on the date 12/12/12, the last such triple-date in this year in Hong Kong as they believe the date will bring them everlasting love. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

When the clock strikes 12:12

Twelve-word vows say it all



KEITH SRAKOCIC/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Federal Judge Donetta Ambrose, left, signals that there are five more minutes before she starts the wedding between Deputy U.S. Marshal Brian Allen, centre, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Amy Johnson in federal court in Pittsburgh on Wednesday. Ambrose started their wedding at 12:12 p.m. at the couple's request, where they exchanged 12-word vows on 12/12/12. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chinese numerology

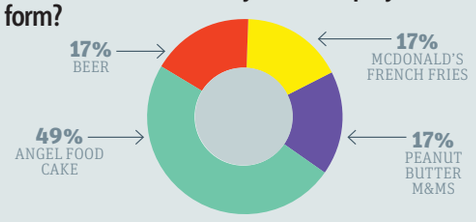
"One is considered a yang number, while two is considered a yin number. Combining the two can offer new couples balance."

Marketing firm Back Bar USA in a press release announcing its $1,212,120 Las Vegas wedding package that included the use of a private jet, watches and earrings for the wedding party, and dinner at a Michelin-rated restaurant.

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

Pizza Hut is making a pizza-scented perfume. What other foods would you like in spray-on form?



Twitter

@lesleymac: Sitting on the top of the ferry even though its cold cause the fresh air helps your hangover #halifax #mylife

@HalifaxRyanG: My office has a mouse and ghosts. I don't know which I'm more scared of. #Halifax #notwinning

@robbsdrawings: Happy to announce my Nathan MacKinnon prints will soon be available for purchase in the Halifax Mooseheads store at the Metro Centre.

@sunayas: The passes back and forth between Nathan MacKinnon & Jonathan Drouin are just ridiculous. #WJC2013

@downtownpaul: First time I've heard downtown mentioned so prominently in a mayor's Chamber address!

metro
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Local singer ready to try on some new songs for size

Home for the holidays. In the last year, Meaghan Smith has grown as an artist and she's excited to share her new work



BACKSTAGE PASS
Jenna Conter
halifax@metronews.ca

Busy is the life of local artist Meaghan Smith.

Now home in Halifax to play a holiday show this Sunday, the concert was the last thing on her mind during our most recent chat.

"Since the last time we talked, I've written a new record," she said.

Having had the opportunity to interview Smith almost a year ago, I was curious how this creative local lady kept her mind busy.

Since her latest album, It Snowed, Smith has "spent the better part of a year working on writing new songs and we're heading to England to record these tracks."

With close to five years since the production ended on The Cricket's Orchestra, Smith re-enters the creative ring with a flutter of nervous anticipation.

"I'm sort of freaking out," Smith said.

"I have gone through so many things since (my first record) — from being a relatively unknown artist to signing an international record deal with an American label, to having a world class manager — the experience is completely different."

Crossing the pond to record her latest album, Smith's elated with her "unlimited-access-to-dream producers."

She has earned the time and attention of Ash Howes. Known as the "hit maker," he's worked with British pop artists like Dido.

"This album, I'm focusing on continuing the progression from the last record," she said.

"I want to try to shock myself a little bit, so I'm going for a unique sounding, modern vintage production."

Sunday will be Smith's first opportunity to play her new tracks.

"To have new songs to play is both terrifying but of course exciting," she said.

"Like wearing new clothes — I think I've outgrown my old material and I'm ready to start saying new things."

Quoted

"To have new songs to play is both terrifying but of course exciting."

Meaghan Smith on playing her new music for the first time on Sunday

If you go...

Meaghan Smith Holiday Show at The Spatz Theatre goes Sunday at 8 p.m. Visit soniconcerts.com for ticket information.



Meaghan Smith is working with Ash Howes, the man behind British pop star Dido. CONTRIBUTED

Read metro work every Monday and Wednesday for tips and trends in education and employment.

Only in Metro. News worth sharing.



SCENE

Do you hear what we hear?

Weighing up this year's festive albums. As usual, the latest holiday releases are a mixed bag, but Metro helps you sort the naughty from the nice

PAT HEALY
Metro World News in Boston


Sufjan Stevens' version of Christmas is an alternative one. ALL IMAGES HANDOUT

A Different Kind of Christmas – Various artists



Naughty: You're probably not familiar with many of the artists on these 23 tracks. Audio Stepchild? Renzo Charlez? Freshwadda Brooks? Have all of these great hip-hop artists been hiding on the North Pole until now?

Nice: This compilation comes courtesy of Hoopla Worldwide/LRT/INgrooves Fontana ... all imprints we had also never heard of before. But some of the participants have affiliations with Parliament Funkadelic and Nappy Roots. The beats here mostly have a G-Funk feel with little samples of carols thrown in and the rhymes are super positive. Check out 1st Blood and Buffalo Stille's Some Kentucky Bourbon on Christmas Eve and Da Product and J Bill's It Seems Like We Forgot for some of the most festive holiday hip-hop since Run DMC's Christmas in Hollis.

Silver & Gold: Songs for Christmas, Vols. 6-10 – Sufjan Stevens

Naughty: Is Sufjan Stevens trying to take up all our free time this season? Sure, this is a gorgeous collection of 58 holiday-ish tracks (we say "ish" because how is Prince's Alphabet Street a holiday song?). But keep in mind that Stevens recorded these songs over six years. Listeners may want to pace themselves too.

Nice: There are a few songs on here that are the sonic equivalent of sugar plums dancing in your head. Draw the curtains, plug in your tree and zone out to the beautifully textured 10-minute plus opuses Christmas Unicorn and The Child with the Star on His Head.

Cheers, It's Christmas – Blake Shelton

Naughty: His role as a coach on The Voice has earned Blake Shelton a new base of fans who wouldn't ordinarily like his brand of country music. That said, if you don't ordinarily like his brand of country music, you won't like this album.

Nice: Shelton is such a likable personality that this is highly tolerable stuff. Plus, he handpicked some of the most likable side-kicks to guide his sleigh, like Reba, Kelly Clarkson, his wife Miranda Lambert and the king of palatable Christmas charisma, Michael Bublé, who co-wrote one of the songs here. Basically, the cover pic of Shelton in front of the fireplace says it all: It's old-fashioned, steeped in tradition, comfortable and not exactly cool.

Isn't This World Enough? – Various Artists

Naughty: The problem with this post-record industry climate is that there aren't enough Scroogey label CEOs to say, "Yer holiday song stinks!" Therefore, this 14-song comp from the Nettwerk Music Group has a few stinkers from Ash Koley and Jay Brannan. Bah humbug!

Nice: The title track, by the Scottish six-piece Admiral Fallow, might not be the most obvious holiday song (sample lyric: "You don't need to hang your hat on belief in bumper stickers") but there's something classic about it that makes it malleable, the way that Put a Little Love In Your Heart kind of became a holiday staple after it was used in Scrooged. Also worth noting: This compilation kicks off with a rockin' Fun. tune!

Holidays Rule – Various Artists



Naughty: Speaking of compilations that start with a song by Fun., the We Are Young trio have spread themselves too thin for the holidays. With their track, they take a Sleigh Ride down Broadway and make an ill-advised turn into '80s territory. Rufus Wainwright and Sharon Van Etten also deserve a lump of coal for their empty version of Baby, It's Cold Outside.

Nice: This one delivers the most bang for your buck. The Shins run McCartney's Wonderful Christmastime through a Beach Boys filter and turn it into something great. McCartney himself is on here too. Other great performances include Calexico, Eleanor Friedberger and Andrew Bird.

Merry Christmas, Baby – Rod Stewart

Naughty: Stewart exhumes the voice of Ella Fitzgerald for a duet of What Are You Doing New Year's Eve? Let's just hope there is no "live" performance, a la Virtual 2Pac.

Nice: Rod's light rock swing is actually contagious, and you may find yourself saying, "Hey, play that again!" about the original song that Stewart co-wrote, Red-Suited Super Man. Then you'll realize what you just said and lie that you were just kidding. Cee-Lo, Mary J. Blige, Bublé and Trombone Shorty also turn in notable cameos.

The Grinch says ...

- **This Christmas – John Travolta and Olivia Newton John**

If this collection came out in 1980 then maybe there would be a reason for it to exist, but in 2012 there's no need for these 13 tracks. The forced smiles while sipping cocoa on the cover shows that their old chemistry is now gone. We don't like to be Grinchy, but this is the sonic equivalent of reindeer poop.







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Newcomers to the Tolkien universe

The Hobbit. Martin Freeman and Richard Armitage talk about how Peter Jackson's crew was very welcoming to new cast

HEIDI PATALANO
Metro World News



British actor Richard Armitage plays Dwarves' leader Thorin Oakenshield in The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey. CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

In director Peter Jackson's eyes, Martin Freeman was always Bilbo Baggins. While Ian Holm does reprise his role as the older, wiser Bilbo in The Hobbit, there was something about the veteran of The Office and the BBC's Sherlock series that made Freeman an irresistible choice for this younger, more anxious version of Tolkien's most famous character.

"Martin is the only person that we ever wanted for that role and that was really before we met Martin," says Jackson. "We just felt he had qualities that would be perfect for Bilbo — that essential kind of fussy English, slightly repressed quality. We thought he'd be very good at playing that. He's a dramatic actor. He's not a comedian. But he's a dramatic actor who has a very rare comedic skill."

While not originally a fan of the books himself, Freeman was eager to join an already bonded cast and crew.

"My experience of Middle-earth was through the films which I think are still great pieces of work," Freeman says. "From my point of view of turning up and being involved with it, it was a pleasure to be with Pete. It was a pleasure to be with a crew that committed, to get to know actors I knew a little bit from home, but not very well who subsequently became friends … It was great. It had a way of not being intimidating."

Also joining the cast was British actor Richard Armitage, who takes on the character of Thorin, a would-be dwarf king out to avenge the deaths of his father and grandfather. Despite the fact that so many of the cast and crew from The Lord of the Rings series had returned for these three films, Armitage felt the loving embrace of a committed group of artists.

"In terms of coming into an existing franchise, we were just always made to feel very welcome, like we were coming into a family," he says.

"So many people returned that were working on the Rings trilogy. It was just very easy."

Easy in one sense, but quite daunting in another. With the cast committed to a year and a half of shooting, the actual filming process was no casual stroll through Rivendell.

"Working with Peter, the thing that I've realized is that just when you think you've given him everything you've got, he asks you for more and somehow you find it," says Armitage.

"My own limitations of myself, I've had to let those drop because there's always more to give."

Quoted

"In terms of coming into an existing franchise, we were just always made to feel very welcome, like we were coming into a family."

Richard Armitage
Talking about stepping into the Lord of the Rings production group.





METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word



The year in celebrity divorces



THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Yesterday we looked at the big celebrity engagements of 2012. (Aw, love!) So today we'll gaze at the years big celebrity divorces. (Boo, dead love!)

Katy Perry and Russell Brand
Announcement: Dec. 30 (so technically this occurred in 2011 but the fallout was in 2012. Work with me here, folks)
Length of marriage: 14 months
Reason: "She's young, successful and dedicated," Brand said of Perry and her career in an interview with Howard Stern in July. "(The reality is) you can't fully understand it until you do it. I was really into the idea of marriage and having children." Translation: The recovering alcoholic wanted to settle down; she wanted to party.
Contention level: Low. Instead of anger, Perry just seems embarrassed she was ever associated with the comedian. She recently hid under a table to avoid seeing him while she was having lunch with new beau John Mayer.

Heidi Klum and Seal
Announcement: Jan. 23
Length of marriage: 7 years
Reason: Klum was apparently disturbed about Seal's "inability to control his temper."
Contention level: High. The two are currently involved in a very bitter custody dispute over their four children and Klum's estimated $70 million fortune.

Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise
Announcement: June 29
Length of marriage: 5 years
Reason: Cruise was reportedly blindsided by Holmes' highly orchestrated divorce proceedings. One reason for the split? Us Weekly claims that the couple "fought viciously" over Scientology parenting.
Contention level: Medium. The divorce was fast and furious (by comparison, Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries are still in negotiations). Cruise seems sad; Holmes ecstatic. And Suri is still well-dressed.

Amy Poehler and Will Arnett
Announcement: Sept. 6
Length of marriage: 9 years
Reason: Their romance "fizzled out," RadarOnline.com reported.
Contention level: Low. They are too adorable to be mad at one another.



Lindsay Lohan. ALL PHOTOS GETTY

Lohan won't follow Max and The Wanted

Lindsay Lohan has put an end to her gallivanting with on-the-road British boy band The Wanted, cancelling plans to follow the group to London and then Dubai, according to E! News.

Some suspected the change of plans was caused by Lohan's legal troubles, but the starlet is allowed to leave the country while on probation. Perhaps it's because her recent infatuation with Wanted member Max George reportedly isn't all that serious. "All they're doing is hanging out," a source says.

Twitter



@KChenoweth
No one will see Paranormal Activity 4 with me.



@RealMichelleT
What would the Dowager Countess do?



@msleamichele
Another great day of work at #glee! Time to get some rest now! Another big day tomorrow! Xoxo



@rustyrockets
"@JonahHill: Ok so I've decided I'm going to get married soon, I'm just not sure to who yet" I'm free.



Florence Welch

Florence the peacemaker at recent concert

Florence + the Machine singer Florence Welch turned peacemaker at a recent concert in Scotland, halting the show when she spotted two fans quarreling in the front row, according to Us Weekly. "I can't have a fight in front of me while I'm singing this song! No fighting allowed," she said. "I don't know what's happening but I'd like it to stop. It doesn't matter whose fault it is." Others in the crowd weren't pleased with the interruption and had begun chuckling nervously, causing Welch to chide them as well: "Excuse me, all of you. Stop it," she said. "I'm sorry all of you if you're upset." Welch then hopped off stage and hugged one of the fighting girls who appeared to be crying.

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Bask in Rita's aura

Jay-Z's protege spills about her two-tone lip, her knack for nurturing her locks and her long-standing love for Lopez

ROMINA McGUINNESS
life@metronews.ca

No one rocks a strong brow and bold lip quite like Rita Ora does. And so we felt compelled to pick her brain about her trademark look. In the process, Jay-Z's protege gave us a few tips on how to rock a two-tone red pout and the celebrity (it's J.Lo!) whose complexion she covets the most.

On her morning routine...
"In the day, it takes about 10 to 15 minutes (to put my makeup on). If I don't have to wear makeup, I don't. I don't mind being caught on camera bare-faced. And I think having healthy, glowing skin is really important. On off days, I'll wear bronzer and a lipstick, but that's it. A red lip and black liquid eyeliner would be my easiest look. It looks good on blondes — but this is all bleached! "

...and fancy, get-dressed-up, evening ritual
"If I have an event, I might stick some lashes on and maybe put on some golden, bronzy eye shadow, something to make my eyes stand out a bit more. But in the evening, it takes me probably about 25 minutes to do my makeup — if I'm doing it properly.

Do you know what I'm doing right now? The other day, I wore a dress that had pink and red, so I made my top lip pink and my bottom lip red. That was quite cool.

We invented that with my makeup artist. Or you can do bright red on the outside and dark red on the inside and blend it all together.

The main thing is making your skin look flawless, like you have no makeup on."



She's not a natural blonde, but a natural beauty? No question. HANDOUT

Face the facts

"J.LO is my skin idol, I love her. Is that really crazy? Do I sound like a psychopath?"
Rita Ora

Her skin care before bed
"I wash my face every night and use Crème de la Mer moisturizing soft cream as it makes my skin feel nice. But my skin isn't too bad actually."

The hair: to spray or not to spray
"(My hair) takes a lot of work. I used to have really long hair, but when I started dying it and using curling irons and stuff, it dried it out. I'd literally have a hair spray in my bag, which isn't good. Now I use clip-ins so that I don't damage my own hair. I also do a lot of treatments — a lot of oils and masks. But your hair will only absorb so much oil. You also have to eat good. So I eat things like fish for the oils."

Lipstick or lip gloss?
"I love a strong lip. I would see women like Marilyn Monroe and Gwen Stefani with red lips and they never looked like they gave a s—t about what anyone had to say about them. They had such confidence. They were just hot and sexy and not afraid to be different. When I put red lipstick on, I want to be like them."

About that tan
(I feel the most beautiful) when I've got a tan!

Her beauty icons
"Kim Kardashian has good makeup. But J.LO is my skin idol, I love her.

Is that really crazy? Do I sound like a psychopath? My mum's really good with makeup.

She always has a different look. She used to say, 'Don't do a lip and an eye. Pick one.' I follow her advice ... sometimes."



Twitter



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@Jeanne_Beker: Prepping for launch of TheLoop.ca this Thursday! With @Killer_Kurves @BigHipsRedLips @FlawsofCouture



@Jeanne_Beker: My mom sure does love her chocolate... Ready to start a sweet 93rd year!



@Jeanne_Beker: YUMMY!! In the #CTV lobby with model hunks Oren @choosethefro +@JosephCannata @TheMarilynShow



@Jeanne_Beker: With the cool+sexy @jianghomeshi @ArleneDickinson Xmas bash!

The Kit

Canadian street style



Spotted in: Halifax

Sam Rich

Student and stylist at Reginald magazine

Age: 21

What she's wearing
Kelly Wearstler coat, House of Harlow sunglasses, Chanel bag, vintage Chanel boots, J Brand jeans, Autumn cashmere sweater.

Her inspiration
"I take inspiration from blogs like Atlantic Pacific and Man Repeller, from my friends, and my mom is my ultimate fashion inspiration."

THE KIT PHOTOBLOGGER: MEGHAN TANSEY WHITTON, FASHIONEASTHALIFAX.COM

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Creating guest bedrooms where there aren't any

DIY ideas. Make guests feel welcome at your home this holiday season and into the new year

With the holidays around the corner, preparing for overnight guests is inevitable.

Rather than looking at your lack of guest suites as a challenge, consider these ideas for incorporating guest beds into functional living spaces.

Hideaway beds
Fold up the hideaway bed stereotype in your head — newer versions of this classic space saver are both more comfortable and easier to use.

Including one of these in a contemporary cabinet provides an attractive solution for overnight guests without taking up any additional space.

Wall dividers
Make the most of a room by using a wall divider to separate a guest bedroom from a room you are already using such as a home office or gym.

Using mirrored panels or patterned dividers make the room stylish for your use and your guests when they arrive.

Small spaces
Look at the unused nooks and crannies in your home that could be serving a more creative purpose.

For instance, building a simple platform underneath the stairs can easily provide room for a futon or air mattress without invading the space you already have.

Trundle beds
Doubling as a great solution for kids' sleepovers, a trundle bed is two beds that take the space of one. The second bed is tucked underneath and rolls out when needed.

This is a great solution for additional guests that doesn't take up any extra space in your home.

Moveable partitions
If you have no choice but to sleep guests in high traffic areas of your home, installing a partition will provide the necessary privacy.

Consider moving bookshelves or glass doors that will keep an open feeling and won't entirely divide the overall room.



Anitra Mecadon, host of DIY Network's Mega Dens. HANDOUT

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HOLIDAY 2012
gift guide



Kindle Keyboard 3G — $189 | Kobo Glo — $129.99 | Sony Reader — $139.99 | Kobo Mini — $79.99

Yule love these e-readers

MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

It's hard to believe just a few years ago e-books were only for the tech savvy. Now, avid readers, commuters and travellers are frequently seen carrying these handy devices.

They are much lighter than a paperback and can store thousands of titles. Here are a few of the best e-readers for your loved one.

Sony Reader — $139.99
Sony has changed the design of its latest e-reader, dropping a few features like the headphone jack, but the end result is a more affordable device. With a dedicated public library button, Sony makes it easy to download books from your local library.

Kobo Glo — $129.99
The perfect e-reader for those who like to read in bed. The Kobo Glo has an adjustable illuminated screen so you can read in any lighting condition. Expandable memory allows for an additional 32GB of storage, basically allowing for more than 30,000 titles to fit on your device.

Kindle Paperwhite — 139.99 US
If you are planning a trip to the U.S. you might want to pick up this new e-reader from Amazon (available in select box stores). Like the Glo, the Kindle Paperwhite has an illuminated screen but with higher resolution and contrast. It's light and has a battery capable of lasting eight weeks on a single charge. There is a cheaper version of Paperwhite with ads (Amazon calls these "special offers"), so if this will annoy you make sure you get the "Without Special Offers" model. Also available with 3G for those who like to travel.

Kobo Mini — $79.99
The world's smallest and lightest e-reader. You can actually fit the Kobo Mini in your pocket. Despite its palm-sized footprint, this device has the regular features of a larger Kobo, complete with anti-glare screen and long battery life. Perfect for those who read on the go.

Kindle Keyboard 3G — $189
This older model of Amazon's popular e-reader is available in select Canadian stores. It may be one of the originals, but it remains a favourite for those who like downloading on the go. The 3G connectivity means you can download new titles anywhere you have cell reception at no additional charge. The built-in keyboard is great for those who hate touchscreen typing.

Kindle Paperwhite — 139.99 US

12 shopping days left



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Best books for the ladies on your list

HEATHER BUCHAN
For Metro

A roundup of the top five books that are sure to engross the women on your Christmas 2012 gift list — and two stocking-stuffer suggestions.

Fifty Shades Trilogy

E. L. James, $47.85, Knopf Doubledy Publishing Group, Paperback Box Set.

The three-volume paperback boxed set of the New York Times #1 bestselling trilogy includes Fifty Shades of Grey, Fifty Shades Darker and Fifty Shades Freed.

Dear Life

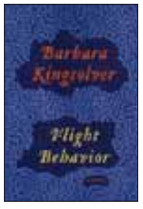
Alice Munro, $32.99, McClelland & Stewart, Hardcover.



The award-winning author illumines the moment a life is shaped — the moment a dream, or sex or a twist of fate turns a person out of her accustomed path and into another way of being — with stories set in the area around Lake Ontario where Munro herself lives.

Flight Behavior

Barbara Kingsolver, $31.99, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., Hardcover.



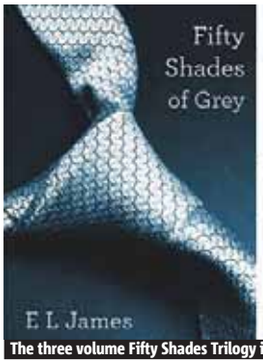
Set in present-day rural Tennessee, this novel tells to the story of Dellarobia Turnbow, a restless young farmwife who, after years of isolation and boredom, finds her path in life suddenly opening out.

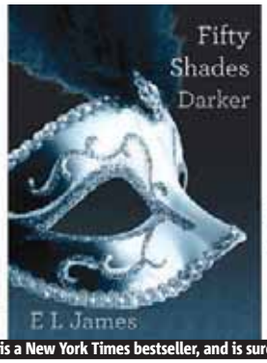
Let's Pretend This Never Happened: (A Mostly True Memoir)

Jenny Lawson, $27.50, Penguin USA, Hardcover.



Blogging sensation Jenny Lawson takes readers on a hilarious journey recalling her bizarre upbringing in Texas, her awkward high school years and her relationship with her long-suffering husband. The premise: the most mortifying moments of our lives are the ones that define us.





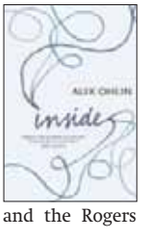




The three volume Fifty Shades Trilogy is a New York Times bestseller, and is sure to be a hit with the book-lovers on your list. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

Inside

Alix Ohlin, $22.95, House of Anansi Press Inc., Paperback.



Shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, the book follows four compelling and complex characters from Montreal, New York, Hollywood and Rwanda, and explores the dangers and imperatives of making ourselves available to, and responsible for, those dearest to us.

And check out these paperback stocking stuffers:

Bossypants

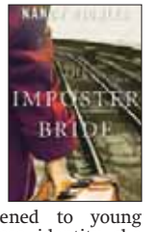
Tina Fey, $17.50, Little, Brown and Company, Paperback.



With frank humour, Fey tells her life story — from her early days as a nerd to landing on Saturday Night Live to becoming a mom. As the book's description says: Tina Fey reveals all, and proves what we've all suspected: you're no one until someone calls you bossy. (Includes Special, Never-Before-Solicited Opinions on Breastfeeding, Princesses, Photoshop, the Electoral Process and Italian Rum Cake!).

The Imposter Bride

Nancy Richler, $17.99, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., Paperback.



The story centres around Lily Azerov, a young woman arriving in postwar Montreal to meet her betrothed, Sol Kramer. But Lily is not who she claims to be. Who is Lily and what happened to young woman whose identity she stole?



Top holiday reads for him



HEATHER BUCHAN
For Metro

A rundown of the top books that are sure to engross any man on your gift list this Christmas.

The Racketeer

John Grisham, Random House, $28.95, Paperback.

In this wickedly clever new novel from the master of the legal thriller, judge Raymond Fawcett is found dead in his remote lakeside cabin and one man, Malcolm Bannister, a.k.a. the Racketeer, knows who killed the federal judge and why.

Drop Dead Healthy: One Man's Humble Quest for Bodily Perfection

A.J. Jacobs, Simon & Schuster, $18.99, Paperback.

Jacobs, editor-at-large at Esquire magazine, explores every aspect of the body in this New York Times Bestseller and, over the course of two years, subjects himself to a grueling yet entertaining regimen of exercise, diets and experiments in his quest to makeover his body and become the healthiest person in the world. Part memoir, part adventure, part how-to manual, the book is not only informative and inspiring but a tremendously good laugh.

419

Will Ferguson, Penguin Group Canada, $20, Paperback.

Winner of the 2012 Scotiabank Giller Prize, this novel is described as both epic in its sweep and intimate in its portrayal of human endurance. Author Ferguson, an internationally bestselling travel writer, takes readers deep into the labyrinth of lies that is the world's most insidious Internet scam. Lives intersect. Worlds collide and it all begins with a single email: "Dear Sir, I am the daughter of a Nigerian diplomat and I need your help."

Mortality

Christopher Hitchens, McClelland & Stewart, $22.99, Hardcover.

Based on award-winning columnist Hitchens' columns in Vanity Fair that chronicled his year-and-a-half battle with esophageal cancer, Mortality is the writer's most honest and reflective. Throughout the course of his ordeal, which ended with his death in December 2011, Hitchens bravely refused the solace of religion, preferring to confront death with both eyes open.

Cloud Atlas

David Mitchell, Knopf Canada, $24.95, Paperback.

In this captivating 2004 novel (from which the current science fiction drama starring Halle Berry and Tom Hanks was adapted), award-winning British author David Mitchell erases the boundaries of language, genre and time to offer a meditation on humanity's dangerous will to power and where it may lead us through six nested stories spanning centuries and continents.

Whirl Away: Stories

Russell Wangersky, Thomas Allen Publishers, $21.95, Paperback.

Everyone has a particular personal skill that they use to keep their lives moving forward when things suddenly become difficult. This collection of short fiction looks at what happens when people's personal coping skills go awry.

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Teen dream beauty care

JANINE FALCON
For Metro

From savvy style advice to smart skincare to totally adorbs makeup, great gift ideas for the teens in your life.

A energizing citrus kick in the morning shower via a **LUSH Cool Christmas** duo is just the thing for sleepyhead teens. $16.95, lush.ca

Whether your teen is obsessed with fashion or just developing his or her own style, **Learn to Speak Fashion: A Guide to Creating, Showcasing and Promoting Your Style** (Owl Kids, 2012) offers smart insider insight, advice and encouragement you'll love too. $16.95 paperback, chapters.indigo.ca.

Put the kybosh on clogged teenage pores with a **Clarisonic Mia** for deep-cleaning sessions every other day. $139, sephora.ca.

No girl can resist mini beauty treats; the **Soap & Glory Small Wonders Gift Set** totes fits the mini bill (and your wallet). $20, Shoppers Drug Mart.

If you love makeup, you'll want to snag a **Stila Snow Angel Color Palette** — 18 shadows, 12 blushes and a mascara (not shown) — for yourself, too. $51, sephora.ca.

Get your teen on a good-skin regimen with a **Dermalogica Clean Start Starter Kit**, which handles pesky zits, too. $45.50, cleanstart.dermalogica.com.ca

From the fashion queen of whimsy, this **Anna Sui Holiday Collection** includes blush, shadow, lip gloss and a sweet lacy pouch. $50, Sears.ca and Murale.ca.

The Body Shop For Men Maca Root Scrub & Shave Set sets your young fellow up with face wash, moisturizer — and eye cream Dad can swipe. $35, thebodyshop.ca.

Nourishing essentials for feet and hands, such as the **Burt's Bees Best of Burt's Bees Set**, are easy stocking stuffers. $24.99, burtsbees.ca.



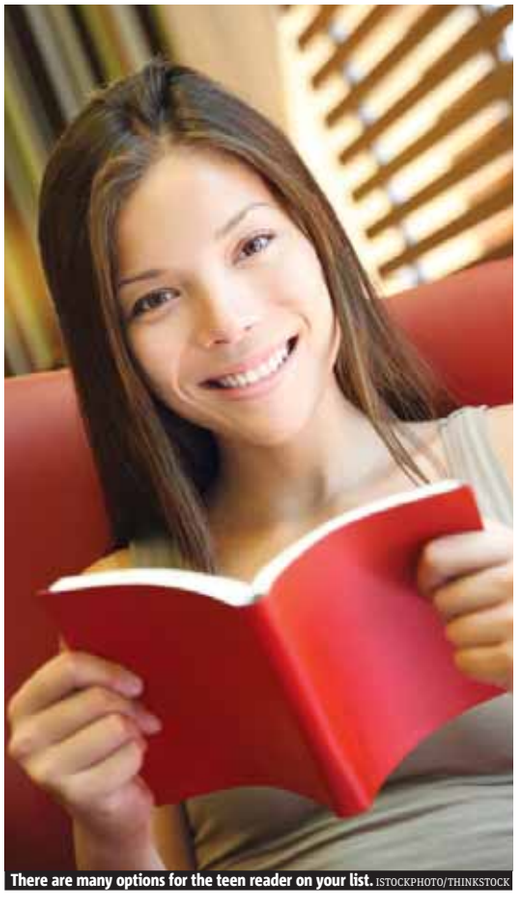
Clockwise, from top: Anna Sui Holiday Collection; LUSH Cool Christmas; and Stila makeup palettes.



Enjoy the Holidays with a Juno Award Winner
Meaghan Smith – It Snowed
Available at your favourite music store and iTunes!
MEAGHAN SMITH'S HOLIDAY SHOW AT THE SPATZ THEATRE, DEC. 16
Tickets exclusively online at www.sonicconcerts.com.
Doors open at 7 p.m.
WARNER MUSIC CANADA
meaghansmith.com





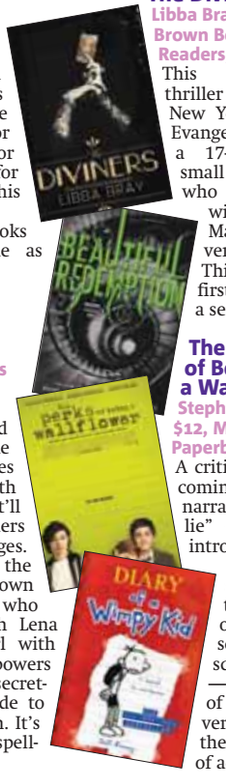

There are many options for the teen reader on your list. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

Best bets for teen book-lovers

HEATHER BUCHAN
For Metro

Here, a selection of the best books to leave under the Christmas tree, or in a stocking, for those hard-to-buy-for teens in your life this holiday season.

All of the books are also available as eBooks.



Beautiful Redemption

Kami Garcia, $21, Little Brown Books for Young Readers, Hardcover.

The fourth and final book in the Beautiful Creatures series is filled with plot twists that'll keep teen readers turning the pages. The book follows the journey of small-town teen Ethan Wate who falls in love with Lena Duchannes, a girl with supernatural powers that unveil a secretive and cursed side to Ethan's hometown. It's been declared a spellbinding love story.

The Diviners

Libba Bray, $24, Little Brown Books for Young Readers, Hardcover.

This supernatural thriller set in Jazz Age New York centers on Evangeline O'Neill, a 17-year-old from small town Ohio who is sent to live with her uncle in Manhattan. Adventure ensues. This book is the first instalment in a series.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

Stephen Chbosky, $12, MTV Books, Paperback.

A critically acclaimed coming-of-age novel, narrated by "Charlie" — a shy and introverted teen who writes a series of letters to an anonymous person describing various scenes in his life — explores topics of sexuality, introversion, drugs and the awkwardness of adolescence.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid

Jeff Kinney, $13, Harry N. Abrams, Hardcover.

The first in a series of innovatively illustrated books of the same name, this realistic fiction novel about a boy named Greg Heffley and his struggles in middle school was named a New York Times bestseller when it was released in hardcover in 2007.

Tilt

Ellen Hopkins, $22, Margaret K. McElderry Books, Hardcover.

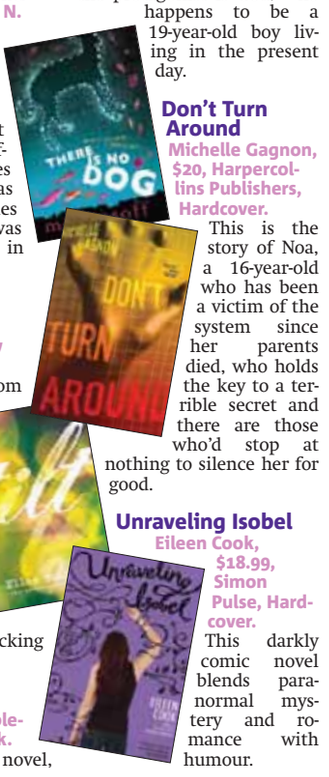
A riveting novel from New York Times best-selling author, Ellen Hopkins, follows three teens whose stories are interconnected through their parents' family relationships.

And try these stocking stuffers:

There is no Dog

Meg Rosoff, $13, Doubleday Canada, Paperback.

In this darkly funny novel, the protagonist is God, who happens to be a 19-year-old boy living in the present day.



Don't Turn Around

Michelle Gagnon, $20, Harpercollins Publishers, Hardcover.

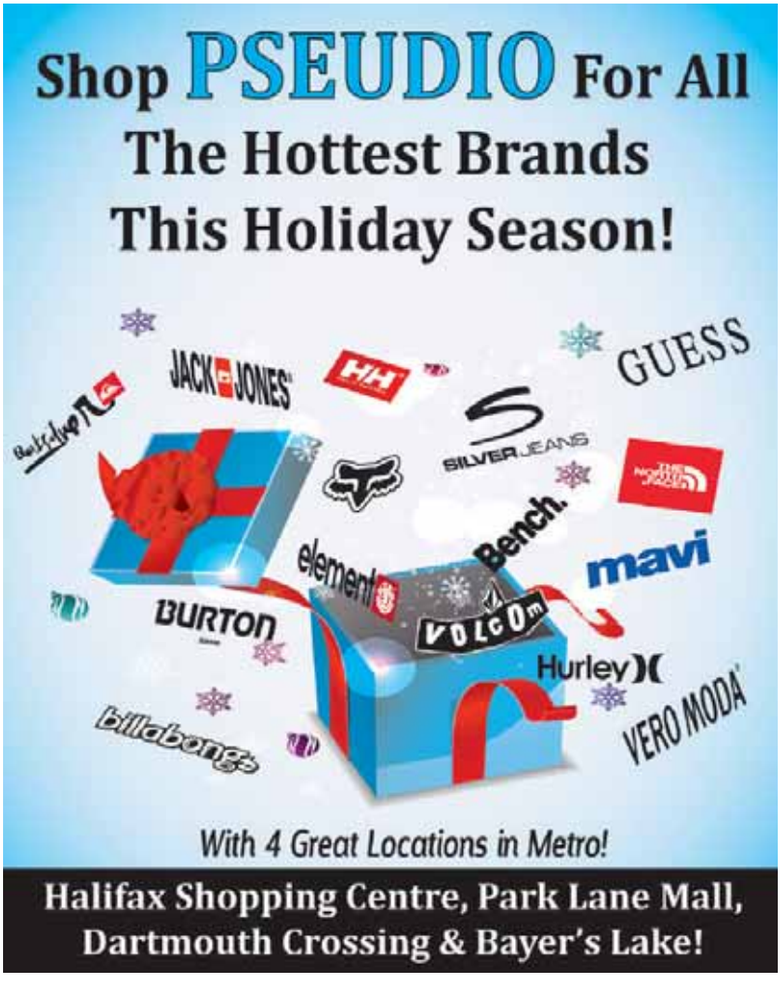
This is the story of Noa, a 16-year-old who has been a victim of the system since her parents died, who holds the key to a terrible secret and there are those who'd stop at nothing to silence her for good.

Unraveling Isobel

Eileen Cook, $18.99, Simon Pulse, Hardcover.

This darkly comic novel blends paranormal mystery and romance with humour.





Hit all the right notes



Soundfreaq Sound Kick — $99.99



Ambiance. Music from these MP3 players and accessories can add to holiday atmosphere



MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

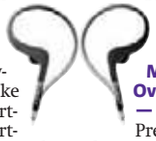


Music can invigorate, relax, and inspire. It's no wonder so many choose to share the gift of music during the holidays. Here are the best MP3 related gifts you can put under the tree.

iPod Touch — $299 and up
All the features of an iPhone without the actual phone. Apple's iPod Touch remains one of the best MP3 players on the market, probably due to the fact you can do so much with it. Play games, download apps, or video chat with loved ones. The new stylish design and retina screen ensure this will be a hit on Christmas morning.

Samsung Galaxy Player 4.2 — $179.99
A device for those who prefer Android over Apple. The Galaxy Player puts everything you like about Android smartphones into a small portable device minus the monthly fees. Music, apps, camera … it's all here, including FM radio!

Belkin Bluetooth Music Receiver — $49.95
Play music from your Bluetooth-enabled devices through your home stereo or standalone speakers — wirelessly. This tiny device will work with any speaker or stereo as long as it has an "aux in" port. Despite its small size, it transmits up to 33 feet away and will remember up to six paired devices.



Monster Inspiration Over-Ear Headphones — $349.99
Premium headphones for the audiophile in your life. These noise-cancelling headphones feature exceptional music production with ultra-comfortable ear cushions for extended wear. Remote and microphone cables come included so you can take calls on your smartphone without missing a beat. You can also swap out the headband for a more personalized look.





Soundfreaq Sound Kick — $99.99
Great sound without breaking the bank. This portable Bluetooth speaker not only gives you seven hours of play on a single charge, it also features a USB port so you can charge your MP3 player or smartphone. Brilliant!

Sony XBA Balanced Armature Sports Earbuds — $99.99
Ideal for those who listen to music while working out. These earbuds are not only sweat-resistant, they are waterproof, meaning you can wash them to ensure they are clean and ready for your next workout. Washing your MP3 player, however, isn't recommended.

SiriusXM Lynx — $299.99
A satellite radio receiver like no other. Listen to SiriusXM in your vehicle or in your home via Wi-Fi. This small, stylish receiver allows you to pause, rewind and record satellite radio, stream to Bluetooth speakers in your home, or play your own MP3s thanks to a built-in memory card slot. This is also the first satellite radio receiver to feature a high-definition touchscreen.



Clockwise, from top, iPod Touch — $299 and up, SiriusXM Lynx — $299.99, Belkin Bluetooth Music Receiver — $49.95, Sony XBA Balanced Armature Sports Earbuds — $99.99, Samsung Galaxy Player 4.2 — $179.99.

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Turn your party into a Hope event

Charity. Hosting a holiday bash? Now you can add a feel-good element to your fun

ASTRID VAN DEN BROEK
For Metro



Hosting for Hope is a partnership initiative between the Canadian Women's Foundation and HomeSense. CONTRIBUTED

Looking to do something meaningful this time of year?

While you could collect food for your local food bank or sign up to serve a holiday meal to the homeless, you could also turn your annual holiday open house into a Hosting for Hope event.

Hosting for Hope, which is a partnership initiative between the Canadian Women's Foundation and HomeSense, is a national event in which your party, brunch, lunch, tea or any other holiday party this season can be turned into a fundraiser for local women's shelters and violence prevention programs.

"We're hoping that Canadians, who will already be throwing parties this season regardless, could register their party at hostingforhope.ca and then ask the guests to make a donation instead of bringing a bottle of wine," says Tamara Robbins Griffith, public relations manager for Toronto-based HomeSense.

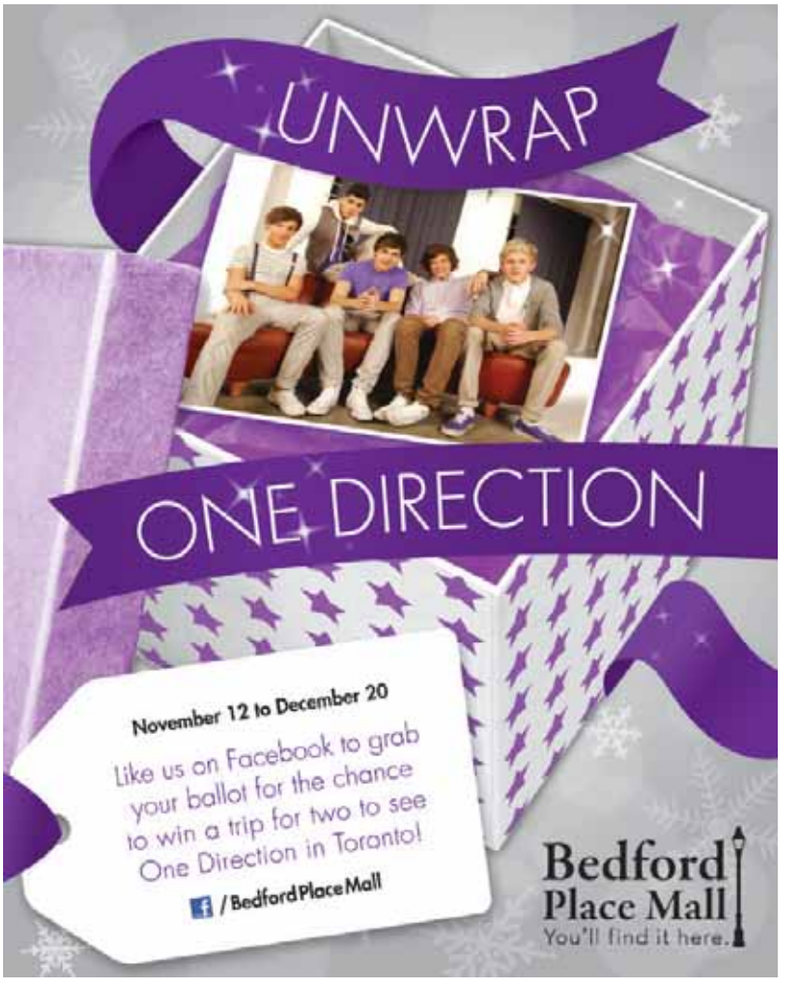
Those hosting the parties register with a $50 contribution to the initiative and from there they can send e-vites, messages and post pictures of their event. In turn, HomeSense will send a $25 thank you gift card to the host.

The site is also home for a number of party planning tips — such as how to dress up your powder room for the event, to how to make your own cake stand, to ideas for a good party playlist, and on the flipside, also allows you to find a shelter near you where your money would go as well as detailing exactly how your donation will be spent.

This is the first year of the initiative and Robbins Griffith hopes it'll prove successful and turn into an annual event.

"We're trying to make it as easy as possible," adds Robbins Griffith. "This is a way to feel really good about the consumerism of the season. We know you're going to spend money throwing your party but wouldn't you rather have your guests make a donation that goes to local women's shelters and violence prevention programs in your community instead of bringing you potentially a hostess gift that you don't need?

"It's not a big ask and it will make people feel really good while having fun."







Tips for toys

RENEE LINDO
YummyMummyClub.ca



Toy selection can be overwhelming, but there are ways to get great value out of the toys you buy for your children. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

As parents, we want to make good decisions on how we spend our money and the value we receive in return, especially when it comes to toys.

A new toy can become "old" very quickly as the toy is no longer interesting or the kids have mastered or outgrown it. A trip to the local toy store, especially over the holidays, can be quite overwhelming for parents — there are thousands of toys available.

Here are a few quick tips to keep in mind as you boldly and confidently choose the perfect toys this holiday season.

Determine the toy's age appropriateness

Every age and every stage of development requires different challenges and support. Evaluate the "fit" for your child in terms of age, maturity, developmental level, and where their interests lie.

Evaluate the educational component/value

Look for toys that teach more than one thing and can be used in several different ways. For example, building blocks can teach ABCs, colours and spatial relations, and are also used to build unlimited structures. Similarly, construction sets allow unlimited creations and activities.

Can the toy grow with your child?

You want toys that have utility across several different age ranges. My baby uses blocks because they are colourful and visually exciting and my eight-year-old uses the same blocks to build forts. I think that's good value for money.

Look for problem-solving opportunities

This is why I love puzzles. The best way for children to learn is with puzzles, and they are fun. Puzzles help to develop the all-important logical and abstract "out-of-box" thinking. Puzzles, sorters and stackers are great options.

Encourage imagination

Creative play is another important consideration. By about three years old, storytelling, dress-up and make-believe are a big part of playtime. These activities help formulate their ideas and build literacy skills.

In a nutshell, you want toys that support and augment the learning process with a high fun factor.

YUMMYMUMMYCLUB.CA IS AN ONLINE RESOURCE TO HELP BUSY WOMEN SURVIVE MOTHERHOOD.





FOCUS ON OTHERS THIS SEASON

With Christmas just around the corner, it's pretty much crunch time for getting your shopping done. Have you considered giving "charitable gifts" instead of presents — it's a really good idea.

"It is the time of year for thinking of others and reflecting on what contribution we can make to the world," says Maggie Leithead, president and CEO of Charity Village. "Most of us don't need more in our lives, so giving is a marvellous way to celebrate the holiday."

Owen Charters, CEO of Canada Helps, an online resource for donors and charities, says, "When we are celebrating with gifts and material items and living our lives of abundance, this is a chance to focus on the other side."

Giving a CanadaHelps gift card that supports a charity to a child in your life is a good idea, says Charters, "because it allows them to learn what charity is, why it's important and how to give ... and to think about, after all those great gifts under the tree, what about those who don't have gifts?"

There are so many ways to give. An animal lover, for example, might like to adopt a guide dog puppy and provide funds for its training. A nature lover would appreciate donations to the Nature Conservancy of Canada to help protect habitat for wildlife. For $50, you can pay for cataract surgery for someone in Nepal through SEVA. Plan Canada offers similar options, from buying baby chicks to help a Third World family support itself to up to $250 for classroom essentials. *– Ylva Van Buuren*

RESEARCH CHARITIES BEFORE YOU GIVE

Here is how to ensure your dollars are well-spent.

- Be wary of door-to-door solicitations or phone calls that sound uncertain and pushy. "If you feel pressured, don't give," says Charters at Canada Helps. "Do it on your own terms."
- Most charities have their own websites where you can find more details. Read about what the charity does and ask yourself, "Does the story add up?"
- Ensure the charity is registered by doing a database search on its website or checking at charityfocus.ca.
- Go to CanadaHelps.org, which is a one-stop shop for searching for a cause.

GIFT WRAPPING FOR CHARITY

AVAILABLE AT PARK LANE, SCOTIA SQUARE

Shoppers at Park Lane and Scotia Square can take one more holiday worry off their mind this season with the gift wrapping service being offered at both malls.

With four different sizes of gift bags, complete with tissue paper, ribbons and tags, shoppers' purchases will be beautifully arranged.

"They are very attractive gift bags and are suitable for men and women," says Elizabeth Engram, the marketing director for both malls. "They have nice neutral colours and appeal to everybody."

The cost of the service depends on the size of the gift bag used and the suggested donation amounts are $2, $3, $4 and $5.

The best part is all of the money by this venture will go to the charities that are providing the service.

The booth at Park Lane, located outside of Kellys Luggage, is being staffed by volunteers from Feed Nova Scotia from noon to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, and noon to 6 p.m. Saturday.

At Scotia Square, the Hospice Society of Greater Halifax will be the charitable recipient and it will be operating outside of the Scotiabank from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.

"We are so pleased to be able to help these two organizations, while at the same time providing a valuable service to our shoppers," Engram says.

An added incentive to visit the booths is that people can enter a draw to win a $250 mall gift certificate. At Park Lane, there will be draws on Dec. 14 and 21, while at Scotia Square, there will be draws taking place on Dec. 14, 19 and 21.



CONTRIBUTED

One more added incentive that Park Lane is offering to entice shoppers to visit the mall this holiday season is that it is offering free parking during the week after 6 p.m. and on weekends until Dec. 25.

For more information, please visit shopparklane.ca.



YOU CAN BRING HOPE AND CHANGE

WITH GIFTS OF HOPE FROM PLAN CANADA

Thinking of giving your child's teachers or daycare employees a more meaningful gift this year?

If so, then maybe charitable gift giving is for you. It was for Ruth Pogue and her husband, Greg McLean, who opted to give their children's teachers Gifts of Hope through Plan Canada rather than yet another coffee mug and gift card. Gifts of Hope is Plan Canada's ethical gift giving program focused on bringing change and hope to communities in need.

"I was looking for something different to give," says the Calgary-based Pogue. "And I'd just received a Plan Canada catalogue for Gifts of Hope in the mail. I started thumbing through it and there were some great gifts in there for $25 to $30 so I started giving those at Christmastime to teachers."

For Pogue it was a way to give a gift with more impact — after all, Plan, a non-profit charity, reaches more than 90,000 communities and 174.2 million people around the world. "What I like about Plan is that a lot of their Gifts of Hope are providing solutions to people, be it water or nutrition or maternity clinics," Pogue adds. "So they're enduring gifts or opportunities to help on an ongoing basis."

That's the intention of these gifts, notes Jeff Cornett, Plan Canada's vice-president of donor marketing. "Whether it is clean water for a family, a mango tree for a classroom to teach children gardening skills, or a goat that will provide milk, nourishment, and a source of income for a family, these gifts create a real difference in the lives of children and can help lift entire communities out of poverty."



Ruth Pogue with her husband, Greg McLean.

PLAN CANADA PHOTO

Last year's enduring gift that Pogue selected was the peanut butter project, a gift that, for $35, helps provide a valuable source of protein for growing children, and supports local businesses as well. The gift funded women's peanut butter co-operatives whose work included processing the peanuts, and also provided them with training in business and marketing.

While the catalogue is available online at plangifts.com, you can also order the gifts by phone at 1-800-387-1418 or mail in the catalogue order form. And along with giving the gift, Plan also followed up and sent Pogue and fellow donors updates about how some of the projects were faring.

"With Plan Canada, I feel like there really is a plan," Pogue says.

"It's helping these communities to further themselves. You feel your money is going to something worthy."

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

When donating to charities, many of us pick a donation area that's significant to us. And it's the ability to direct donations that donors like Kathy Crowell enjoy when she purchases a Gift of Hope through the non-profit charity Plan Canada.

Gifts of Hope is Plan Canada's ethical gift giving program focused on bringing change and hope to communities in need.

"I've given my sister Gifts of Hope for the past few years as Christmas gifts," Crowell says.

"I've always given livestock as she is a true animal lover."

Gifts of Hope allow donors to direct funds and engage in Plan's key areas of work such as education, health, clean water, micro-finance and livelihood, and disaster and emergency response.

Many of Plan Canada's gifts also have a donation matching system in which contributions can be matched with a donation from generous funding partners. For example, a $70 donation to provide maternity beds and supplies has a 6-to-1 match ratio, meaning a $70 donation actually ends up having a value of $490.

While a number of Gifts of Hope continue to be popular — such as a mango trees ($15 each, 10 for $120), classroom essentials ($17 for one child, $250 for an entire classroom) to even purchasing a goat ($75 each, $775/herd), which can help provide income and food for families — this year, Plan Canada has also added a number of new gifts. These include: Newborn checkup ($12); maternity beds and supplies ($70); build and stock a school kitchen ($500); and more.



Kathy Crowell in the Virunga mountains with students who are learning a traditional dance.

PLAN CANADA PHOTO

"In addition, this year anyone who purchases a Gift of Hope will be entered to win a trip to Tanzania in 2013 to see Gifts of Hope in action," says Jeff Cornett, Plan Canada's vice-president of donor marketing.

That's what Crowell had a chance to do last year when she travelled to Rwanda through the organization.

"We were able to see the school that was being built, a clinic, a livestock co-op and a micro-financing project," she says.

"Plan Canada is truly making a difference in the world — these Gifts of Hope work. My experience in Rwanda was life-changing."

FIVE GIFTS FOR LESS THAN $50

Here are five gifts less than $50 you can get through Plan Canada's Gifts of Hope program.

NEWBORN CHECKUP ($12): To help support workers who visit moms and their newborns in the first three days of the baby's birth, this kind of checkup can help improve infant mortality rates.

3 BABY CHICKS ($17): Once they start laying eggs, chickens become an instant source of income, often for women. They are also an important teaching tool for young girls to learn livestock management skills.

GIRLS' HYGIENE ESSENTIALS ($25): This gift is essential and can be handed out in critical times such as war/conflict or a natural disaster.

ANTI-MALARIA BED NETS ($30): These nets are locally made and can cover an entire family to help prevent the spread of malaria.

ENDLESS HARVEST ($40): An all-in-one gift that provides gardening essentials such as seeds, tools and training in pest control and farm management.

EMERGENCY ESSENTIALS ($50): For natural disasters or emergencies of any kind, this gift allows Plan to get into a crisis zone fast to help distribute clean water, tarps, high-energy food rations, hygiene supplies and more.


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Why a goat?
When you give a goat, you provide a family in a developing country with nourishment, the makings of a family business, and a new future. **Gifts of Hope** are real gifts to real projects that change real lives.
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Think outside the gift box
Shop now at plangifts.com
Plan is one of the world's oldest and largest international development agencies, working in partnership with millions of people around the world to end global poverty.
Plan

Cookbook of the Week

Seafood made easy

Love seafood but don't have the time to get creative with cooking it? Enter 200 Best Canned Fish & Seafood Recipes by Susan Sampson. The book is full of traditional and updated recipes, new creations and canned twists on classic fish dishes. Master dishes such as Salad Nicoise, Fish Tacos, Lemon Pepper-Shrimp Pasta, Lobster Mushroom Bisque, and more. METRO

Baby shrimp and crab meat make a delicious duo in delicate fried cakes



ROSE REISMAN
for more, visit
rosereisman.com

I love the traditional fried crab cakes served in restaurants, but are they ever high in calories and fat! Here I've used a combination of baby shrimp and crabmeat and sautéed them in a very small amount of oil. The low-fat mayonnaise sauce goes beautifully with these delicate cakes.

They end up at 99 calories and 5.8 grams of fat per serving.

Ingredients

Cakes
- 6 oz chopped crabmeat (or surimi)
- 4 oz baby shrimp (cooked)
- 3 tbsp light mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup chopped green onion
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/2 cup dried unseasoned bread crumbs
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp crushed fresh garlic
- 1/2 tsp crushed fresh ginger
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp vegetable oil

Sauce
- 1 tbsp light mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp low-fat sour cream
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 tsp low-sodium soy sauce

Garnish
- 1/4 cup finely diced red bell pepper

1. To make the cakes, combine the crabmeat, shrimp, mayonnaise, lemon juice, green onion, cilantro, bread crumbs, egg, garlic, ginger and mustard in a food processor. Finely chop until the mixture just comes together. Don't purée. Alternatively, chop by hand.

2. Form into 6 cakes.

3. Spray a non-stick skillet with cooking oil. Add the vegetable oil and place over medium heat. Sauté the cakes for about 5 minutes per side, or just until browned and hot.

4. To make the sauce, combine the mayonnaise, sour cream, sesame oil and soy sauce in a serving bowl. Whisk until smooth.

5. Garnish with the red pepper and serve the sauce alongside.

Asian Crab and Shrimp Cakes



This recipe serves six. BRIAN MACDONALD, FROM ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN





Halifax tough to beat at both ends of the ice

'Underrated.'
Mooseheads' defensive dominance flies under radar



PHILIP CROUCHER
philip.croucher@metronews.ca

The Halifax Mooseheads are taking a back seat to no one offensively this season.

On the defensive end, it's almost just as impressive.

Halifax, which has scored the most goals in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (151), is also tied for second in fewest allowed (82). They have also given up three goals or less in 24 of 30 games.

There's more, too. How about just 24.4 shots allowed per game, and in eight of those contests, fewer than 20 pucks on net.

"We are definitely in the shadow of our superstars up front," said Mooseheads defenceman Trey Lewis. "I think our D core is underrated throughout the league … the guys no one really knows. The Gazollas, the Weegars, the Gillards — the stay-at-home guys who aren't real known but are underrated."

Of course, it helps when you have so much firepower up front as opposing teams are left trying to get the puck away from them much of the game. But when the opposition is in the Mooseheads zone, Halifax plays it tight.

That includes when shots get taken, as players try to get in front of the puck with either their stick or body.



Halifax Mooseheads defenceman Trey Lewis is plus-17 this season, one of 12 players in double digits for the statistic on the team. JEFF HARPER/METRO

"One of our goals this year is to have the fewest goals against," said Lewis, the team's co-captain. "Shots are what cause goals and we've been practising a lot in getting sticks on pucks and deflecting a lot of shots.

"Just little things like that are what are helping to keep the shots down."

The forwards are playing their part, too. Rarely do you see them not skating back defensively, or working hard in the corners for the puck, which helps lead to quicker clearing attempts.

"We really divide the game into individual aspects," said Mooseheads centre Brent Andrews. "The defence jump into the play, they rush in with the guys, but at the same time they keep everything in their end simple.

"So if they keep things in their end simple and get the puck to us quickly, then obviously there's going to be less time in our zone."

Halifax will look to keep that trend of less time in its end going Thursday when it hosts the Prince Edward Island Rocket at 7 p.m.

Quoted

"I think our defence has been a huge part of our game this year."
Halifax Mooseheads blue-liner Trey Lewis

Forward

Cuzner back with Moose for four games

The Halifax Mooseheads are bringing back hard-working forward Brad Cuzner for a four-game stint.

The team announced Wednesday that the 20-year-old will fill in one of the three overage positions as blue-liner Konrad Abeltshauser continues to recover from a broken bone in his wrist.

Cuzner will play the first of the four games Thursday when Halifax hosts the Prince Edward Island Rocket.

Cuzner, who was cut by Halifax in late September, has been playing this season with the St. Francis Xavier X-Men and has three goals and three assists in 16 games. He is currently on Christmas break with the team

He played in 62 games for the Mooseheads last season, recording 12 goals and 24 points in 62 games.

Opportunity knocks for forwards

For those Halifax Mooseheads forwards normally on fourth-line or press-box duty, it's an opportunity they'll want to make the most of Thursday night.

With star forwards Nathan MacKinnon, Jonathan Drouin and Martin Frk all trying out at junior selection camps, Halifax's lesser-knowns will benefit by seeing more ice time.

That list includes Ryan Falkenham, Dominic Beauchemin, Max Lindsay and Liam Alcalde.

"It's a chance for guys like me to step up and play our game and show (the coach) what we can do," said Falkenham, who has been centring the fourth line for much of the current campaign.

Halifax has also called up Brandon Pye from the Truro Bearcats and he is expected to play Thursday against the Rocket, as it's all hands on deck for the Mooseheads when it comes to the forwards.

PHILIP CROUCHER/METRO

Top prospects

3

Three Mooseheads players — Zachary Fucale, Nathan MacKinnon and Jonathan Drouin — have been named to the CHL's top-prospects game.



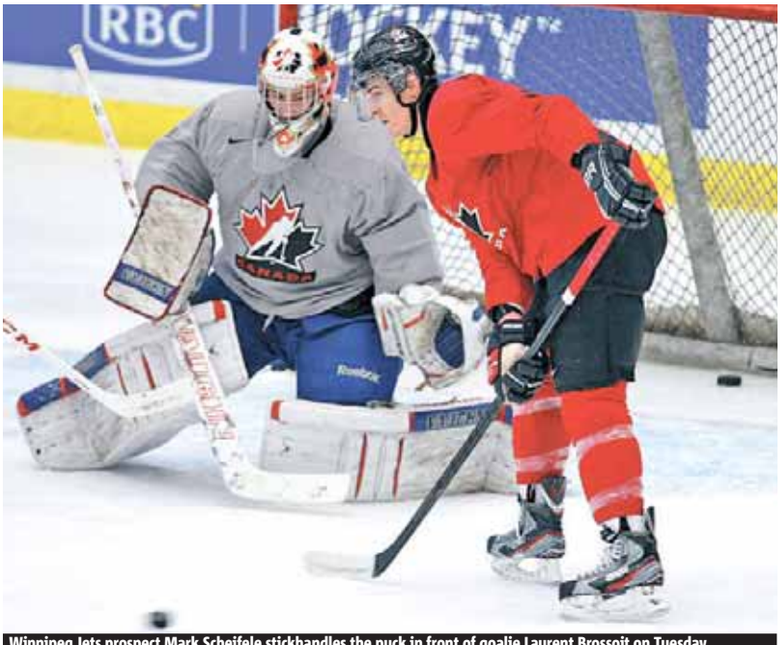
Mooseheads centre Ryan Falkenham
JEFF HARPER/METRO

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Scheifele adapts to right wing to play on juniors' top line

World junior selection camp. Forward says right-wing experience to this point was limited to a few practices with the Jets



Winnipeg Jets prospect Mark Scheifele stickhandles the puck in front of goalie Laurent Brossoit on Tuesday at junior team selection camp in Calgary. Scheifele was among a dozen players who did not take part in the game against the University of Alberta on Wednesday. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

It was a just a year ago that Mark Scheifele declared he wanted to centre Canada's top forward line at the world junior hockey championship.

He didn't get his way. That distinction went to Ryan Strome with Scheifele playing the middle on Canada's second line.

Scheifele looks like he will get a chance to play on the top unit this year, but as a converted right-winger.

Canadian team head coach Steve Spott had Scheifele on the right side of Edmonton Oilers centre Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and left-winger Jonathan Huberdeau from the start of this week's selection camp in Calgary.

"I'm willing to play any position, whatever it is," Scheifele says. "Obviously being on the No. 1 line right now with Huberdeau and Nugent-Hopkins, I just want to stay on that, obviously make the team."

That he'll make the team isn't in question. The 19-year-old from Kitchener, Ont., would have played for the Winnipeg Jets this season if not for the NHL lockout.

Spott began preparing Scheifele, the six-foot-three, 187-pound forward, for the switch to right wing with the call to invite him to selection camp.

With the help of his Barrie Colts head coach Dale Hawerchuk, a former Jet himself, Scheifele worked on chipping the puck up the boards and getting the puck to the centre on the fly during practices prior to his arrival in Calgary.

"You've got to battle more along the walls especially," Scheifele said. "It's a good thing to add to your resumé. If you can play right wing, it gives coaches at the next level a different opportunity."

Scheifele, Nugent-Hopkins and Huberdeau were among a dozen players who didn't play in Wednesday's 4-1 exhibition loss to the University of Alberta Golden Bears.

Canadian defenceman Frank Corrado of the Sudbury Wolves scored for the second time in as many days. He scored the winner in the previous night's intrasquad game.

Malcolm Subban had a tough start in Canada's net as he gave up three goals on Alberta's first seven shots, but settled down and made 11 saves. Jordan Binnington then turned away seven of eight in his half of the game.

Laurent Brossoit and Jake Paterson, the two other goalies competing for three spots on Canada's roster, tended Alberta's nets. Brossoit stopped 18 of 19 shots before giving way to Paterson, who stopped the 12 he faced.

"There are some players in my mind here this evening that didn't take advantage of a very good opportunity," Spott said. "I know there's very good players in the stands, but there's jobs to be had here. I said from Day 1, 'Don't have any regrets,' and I think some players may have some after tonight." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Wednesday's cuts

Defencemen Adam Pelech and Derrick Pouliot and forwards Francis Beauvillier, Sean Monahan and Tyler Graovac were cut from the team, dropping the number of players competing for 23 spots on the team to 32.

- Four goalies, 10 defencemen and 18 forwards remain.
- Another nine hopefuls are expected to be released Thursday.
- Canada's roster for the world junior hockey championship in Ufa, Russia, will also be named then.

NHL

Locked-out players to play charity game

Tampa Bay Lighting forward Steven Stamkos and P.K. Subban of the Montreal Canadiens will lead teams of locked-out NHL players during a charity game next week at the former Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto.

The game will be held next Wednesday at Ryerson University's new Mattamy Athletic Centre, located inside the building the Toronto Maple Leafs called home from 1931-99. The proceeds will benefit the NHL Players' Association's Goals and Dreams fund and RBC's Play Hockey initiative.

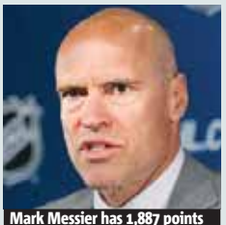
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Top players

Former NHLers honoured with Order of Hockey

Paul Henderson, Dave King and Mark Messier were named to the Order of Hockey in Canada on Wednesday. The 2013 class will be honoured by Hockey Canada in April at a ceremony in Ottawa.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Mark Messier has 1,887 points in 1,756 games over 25 seasons. ELISE AMENDOLA/THE CANADIAN PRESS



Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Focus on what you are good at and forget the rest. If you play to your strengths, you will soon be on the road to fame and fortune. Stop listening to what everyone else is saying and do only what motivates you.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Chances are you will have a flash of insight today that reveals how you can earn big money in the not too distant future. Don't forget though that the future depends a lot on what you do right now, so get busy.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Today's new moon is sure to bring changes in one or more important relationships. Whether they are the kind of changes you enjoy remains to be seen but they are certainly changes that are needed, so don't fight them.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
The more you do now, while you are in the mood to work, the less you will have to do later when you are not. Just remember that you don't have to do something simply because everyone else is doing it.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
A new moon in the most creative area of your chart gives you the kind of confidence you need to move mountains. Both in your personal life and at work you are capable of great things, so don't sell your talents short.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Sometimes it is smart to let your rivals win and this could be one of those occasions. If it gives them the impression that you are losing your grip, it will make it easier for you to win the battles that count!

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Someone you meet today could become more than just a friend, so get up and get out into the world. If a stranger catches your eye, follow it up with a smile and a chat. One thing leads to another.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
You need to come to a decision today about a money matter and the planets will make it easy for you. There is really only one option on the table that is worth pursuing, so commit to it and make it pay.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
A new moon in your birth sign means you will find it easy to get your way over the next 24 hours. Does that fill your head with all sorts of outrageous ideas? It should! There are no limits (for you).

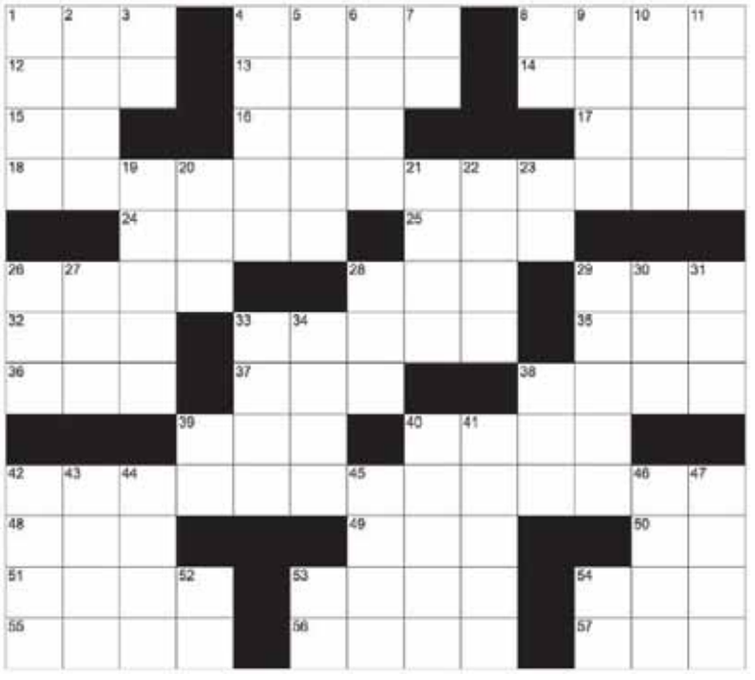
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
How and why did you allow yourself to get worked up about something so trivial? Whatever the reason, you must now stand back from the situation and see it for what it is: a minor inconvenience, nothing more.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You will need to choose between one group of friends and another today. Your time is limited and you can only do justice to one set of commitments, so choose wisely. You can make it up to your other friends later.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Don't get so carried away with your plans and big ideas that you overlook the little things on which they depend. Remember: genius is 10 per cent inspiration and 90 per cent perspiration – yes, even for a Pisces. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword

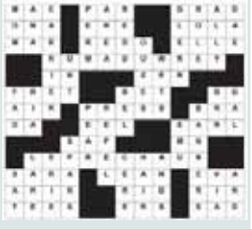
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Nightmare street
4. Ruse
8. Asian nurse
12. Cocoon
13. Comic/actress Tomlin
14. Ward of Once and Again
15. Musical group: — Vogue
16. American Music Awards (abbr.)
17. Refusals
18. 1970's Dick Van Patten series (3 words)
24. Toward sunrise
25. Sanford and —
26. Planet nearest but one to earth
28. — Paulo, Brazil
29. Coffee container
32. Aspire
33. Repeat over
35. Oath affirmation (2 words)
36. Speech hesitation
37. Runner
38. The — Griffith Show
39. Coupe or convertible
40. Send forth
42. Beatles hit song (4 words)
48. Stout
49. Boathouse item
50. Medical drama which starred George Clooney
51. Emily of New —
53. Small branch
54. Form of address
55. Hang
56. Model MacPherson
57. Capone and Capp

Down
1. Fencing sword
2. Burt Reynolds ex.
3. Marcus Welby, —
4. Some shoes
5. Margin
6. Woe is me!
7. — Wife and Kids
8. – The World Turn
9. Restaurant offering
10. Like a bump on – – (2 words)
11. Jumble
19. Bacteria
20. This Hour — 22 Minutes
21. Actor Morales of NYPD Blue
22. Lunch time for many
23. "Strangers – a Train"
26. Screen siren West
27. "— America"
28. Droop
29. Mottled bean
30. The — Couple
31. Christmas trinket
33. Type of horse
34. Wise one
38. Be indisposed
39. Hartford state.
40. High-tech message
41. Unite
42. Sleep under the stars
43. Salve plant
44. Inert gas
45. Wail
46. Bridal accessory
47. Goofs
52. Fargo state
53. — Diem
54. Peru's continent (abbr.)

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

		8	2		4	6		
	2		7		6		5	
6								8
		5	4	2	1	9		
		3	9	5	8	4		
2								6
	3		5		2		9	
		4	3		7	1		

Yesterday's Sudoku

5	4	7	8	6	1	3	2	9
6	9	1	3	4	2	5	8	7
2	3	8	9	5	7	1	4	6
4	1	2	5	7	3	9	6	8
3	5	6	4	6	9	7	1	2
8	7	9	1	2	6	4	3	5
7	6	5	2	3	4	8	9	1
9	2	3	7	1	8	6	5	4
1	8	4	6	9	5	2	7	3









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